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GIORGIO DE CHIRICO
AND THE IDEA OF ENIGMATIC IMAGERY:
THE INNOCENCE OF BECOMING

DEBORAH WALKER
Diploma of Fine Art, Monash University
Graduate Diploma of Fine Art, Victorian College of Arts
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Submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements
for the degree of PhD

DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

March, 2002
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Giorgio de Chirico and The Idea of Enigmatic Imagery:

The Innocence of Becoming

submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

While gratitude is usual, mine is no less sincerely expressed due to this fact. I would like particularly to thank my supervisor Dr. Russell Grigg who offered his expertise and consideration throughout.

I would also like to express my appreciation to Kenneth Wach for generously granting me his time and understanding, along with Dr. Ann McCulloch whose views were given in true Nietzschean spirit.
# CONTENTS

1. GIORGIO DE CHIRICO AND ENIGMATIC PAINTING  

2. NIETZSCHEAN THEMES IN GIORGIO DE CHIRICO  

3. ARIADNE'S THREAD - STATUES AND SHADOWS  

4. STATUES, SHADOWS AND GENERAL  

5. MERCURY'S VOYAGE - VISIONARY MESSAGES  

6. THE ENDLESS VOYAGE  

7. CONCLUSION  

APPENDIX A: Brief Biography  

APPENDIX B: Dionysos and Ariadne  

BIBLIOGRAPHY


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figures</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Giorgio de Chirico, <em>The Soothsayer’s Recompense</em> 1913, oil on canvas,</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>135 X 179 cm., collection Philadelphia Museum of Art.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <em>Ariadne</em>, Rome, Musei Vaticani, Marble, Galleria Dell Statue.</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44 X 115 cm., Private Collection, United States.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Giorgio de Chirico, <em>Piazza d’Italia</em> 1937, oil on canvas, 50 X 40</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cm., collection Galleria Nazionale d’Arte Moderna, Rome.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whereabouts unknown.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Collection.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Antique photo of Piazza Sante Croce with statue of Dante.</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. <em>Apollo Belvedere</em>, Rome, Musei Vaticani, Belvedere Courtyard,</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marble.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milan, reproduced from <em>The Psychoanalytic Journal of Art III</em>.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182 X 141 cm., collection Museum of Modern Art.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>canvas, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Collection.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Victor Emanuel II, King of Sardinia and the First King of Italy.</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Napoleon III.</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Victor Emmanuel III.</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberto, Turin, reproduced from <em>Psychoanalytic Journal of Art III</em>,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Giorgio de Chirico, <em>The Red Tower</em> 1913, oil on canvas, 75 X 100</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cm., collection Peggy Guggenheim Foundation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


34. Giorgio de Chirico, *Self portrait - What shall I love but an enigma*, 70 X 54 cm., Private Collection.  


38. Praxiteles' *Hermes*, holding the infant Dionysus, Marble, Olympia.  

39. *Detail*
40. Giorgio de Chirico, *Meditation of Mercury* datable to 1936, oil on canvas, 65 X 50 cm. 122
41. *Apollo of Piombino*, bronze, Louvre, Paris. 123
42. Detail. 123
44. Giorgio de Chirico, *The Mysterious Bathhouses*, 1968, 60 X 80 cm, oil on canvas, Private Collection. 124
45. Giorgio de Chirico, *Autumn Meditation*, 1912, oil on canvas, Private Collection, United States, 54 X 69. 124
46. Giorgio de Chirico, *The Mysterious Bathhouses (Flight to Sea)* 1968, 80 X 60 cm, oil on canvas, Private Collection. 124
47. Giorgio de Chirico, *The Return of Ulysses* 1968, oil on canvas, 60 X 80 cm, Private Collection. 125
48. Giorgio de Chirico, *Furniture in the Valley*, 1966, 50 X 40 cm, oil on canvas, Private Collection. 125
49. Giorgio de Chirico, *Furniture in the Valley*, 1927, 130 X 96.5 cm, Private Collection. 125
50. Giorgio de Chirico, *Sun on the Easel*, 1973, 64.5 X 81 cm, oil on canvas. 125
51. Giorgio de Chirico, *The Chair*, 1928, 28 X 21 cm, pencil. 125

Sizes are given when available, height preceding width, dates are also given when available, although this has not always been possible due to Giorgio de Chirico’s inconsistent use of dates. The location of the work was not always available. Unless stated the reproductions of Giorgio de Chirico’s paintings are from Weiland Schneid, *Giorgio de Chirico - Leiben und Werk*, otherwise the source of the reproductions are listed with each image. Classical sculptures reproduced from *Taste and The Antique: The Lure of Greek Sculpture 1500 1900* by Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, Yale University Press, 1981. Reproductions related to the Italian Unification are from *Garibaldi - The Revolutionary and his Men* by Andrea Viotti, Blandford Press, U.K., 1997.
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ABSTRACT OF THESIS FOR EXAMINATION

Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis Title: Giorgio de Chirico and the Idea of Enigmatic Imagery

Abstract: My paintings emerge from within a context best explained by reference to Nietzsche’s perspectivism. That is an intellectual attitude that deprivileges rationalism and accommodates scepticism or unknowing as an acceptable starting point. From this standpoint art/language can be seen as being in a state of becoming rather than as representing a state of being. This thesis aims to demonstrate, not only by a philosophical encounter with Giorgio de Chirico’s work: i.e. his use of myth, his Nietzschean perspectivism and his enigmatic interpretation of figuration, that the most helpful context and understanding of my work can be realised. De Chirico’s art, like Nietzsche’s philosophy seeks in its processes to explore the possible unity of Dionysian aesthetic force with the Apollonian. Neither Nietzsche nor de Chirico considered within a post-Socratic world that this unity was realizable. Nevertheless they both share in their respective art forms a need to represent the relentless struggle to enact the disjunction of the two aesthetic forces in a secular world. The artist’s enigmatic imagery is characterized by a consideration of appearance and reality and it is for this reason that the work was selected as a model for investigating the nature of enigma. His use of seemingly straightforward, ordinary images suggests a sense of accessibility, yet at the same time they are irreducible to knowing and my own image-making was greatly expanded by investigating these concerns. I am not arguing that de Chirico was influenced by Nietzsche but instead that Nietzsche’s philosophical point of view and his use of poetic language to express these views lay in discovering the qualities and substance of the Dionysian spirit. As well as working within a Nietzschean world-view set out in The Birth of Tragedy, de Chirico has also drawn on the Italian unification, specifically the Risorgimento and the lineage of these political and mythical figures were endemic to his art and they interface the with his use of the Apollonian-Dionysian disunity first explored by Nietzsche. The focus of the exegesis will be to present the poetic and philosophical use made of the latter in de Chirico’s art. It is anticipated that this philosophical encounter with the aesthetic, social and political world of de Chirico will, not only assist in interpreting his life’s work anew, but will also provide a context in which my paintings of enigma might be interpreted.

Full Name: Deborah Walker

Signed ............................................... Date: ........................
Giorgio de Chirico and Enigma

One should not oneself be misled: great intellects are sceptics. Zarathustra is a sceptic. The vigour of a mind, its ‘freedom’ through strength and superior strength, is ‘proved’ by scepticism. Men of conviction simply do not come into consideration where the fundamentals of value and disvalue are concerned. Convictions are prisons. They do not see far enough, they do not see things ‘beneath’ them: but to be permitted to speak about value and disvalue one must see five hundred convictions ‘beneath’ one - ‘behind’ one . . . A spirit which wants to do great things, which also wills the means for it, is necessarily a sceptic. Freedom from convictions of any kind, the ‘capacity’ for an unconstrained view, ‘pertains’ to strength . . . Grand passion, the ground and force of his being, even more enlightened, more despotic than he himself is, takes his whole intellect into its service; it makes him intrepid; it even gives him the courage for unholy means; if need be it ‘permits’ him convictions. Conviction as a ‘means’: there is much one can achieve only by means of a conviction. Grand passion uses and uses up convictions, it does not submit to them - it knows itself sovereign.

Friedrich Nietzsche, _Twilight of Idols._

One is necessary, one is a piece of fate, one belongs to the whole, one is in the whole - there exists nothing which could judge, measure, compare, condemn our being, for that would be to judge, measure, compare, condemn the whole... But nothing exists apart from the whole! That no-one is any longer made accountable, that the kind of being manifested cannot be traced back to causa prima, that the world is a unity neither as sensorium nor as ‘spirit’, this alone is the great liberation - this alone is the innocence of becoming restored.

Friedrich Nietzsche, _Twilight of the Idols._

Thinking involves a wrenching of concepts away from their usual configurations, outside the systems in which they have a home, and outside the structures of recognition that constrain thought to the already-known.

Elizabeth Grosz, _Space, Time, and Perversion._

It might be argued that this written component is the philosophical mirror image of my paintings which, in engaging with “the innocence of becoming”, were actualizing
Nietzsche’s ‘perspectivism’. Perpectivism, as Nietzsche defined the term, proclaimed many views, that God and all eternal truths and standards had become unbelievable. Nietzsche did not believe that science could provide new absolutes to replace those of metaphysics. One needed to begin anew from a position of ‘innocence’ in which all prior truths were deemed untenable (or, at least, relative). A belief in absolutes was to be replaced by a state of ‘becoming’. In The Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche proposes that aesthetics might replace the role that religion had served, that it alone, with the successful unification of Dionysian and Apollonian forces, could rescue humankind from that insight that it is better “not to be born”. This new way of thinking that Nietzsche called ‘perspectivism’ led him to engage in and draw upon a multiplicity of cultural, social, psychological, linguistic and conceptual analyses from many different perspectives. Philosophical enquiry, Nietzsche insists, is inescapably perspectival. In place of traditional ontological categories and interpretations he saw the world as an interplay of forces without any inherent structure or final end, ceaselessly organizing and reorganizing themselves.

De Chirico was drawn to Nietzsche’s perspectivism. In this thesis I will show how his metaphysical imagery, which in my view is characterised by enigma, expresses in aesthetic form Nietzsche’s philosophy. Integral to this exegesis and my paintings is my adoption of Nietzsche’s perspectivism. This philosophical approach accepts living and thinking as being in a constant state of becoming; it denies that the object of human life is to discover ‘being’ or ‘truth’ but rather that desire is best channeled towards living in a state of perpetual “becoming”. Perspectivism forms the basis of Nietzsche’s thought and can be seen to evolve from his recognition of “erroneous articles of faith” which have been continually inherited until they became almost part of the basic endowment of the species. They include:

that there are enduring things; that there are equal things; that there are things, substances, bodies; that a thing is what it appears to be; that our will is free; that what is good for me is also good in itself.

Alan D. Schift defines Nietzsche’s perspectivism as:

emphasizing perspective and interpretation . . . discursive practice and knowledge relations; refusing to see the world as a series of binary, hierarchical opposition; attending to the interconnections of philosophical, cultural and political institutions, seeing the world in terms of relations and becoming rather than in terms of

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2 Ibid.
fixed identities, making judgments – political and ethical as well as aesthetic – without appealing to fixed, formal or given criteria.  

If "perspectivism" is the name of a philosophical approach, a word that identifies a context of thinking pluralistically and that there are as many ways of seeing as there are people to see or interpret, "becoming" is a term that describes this process of being that is not beyond or outside the world of becoming.  

Joan Stambaugh writes that:  

Becoming is the more familiar aspect of Nietzsche's idea of the innocence of becoming since he wrote about becoming from the very beginning and never lost his preoccupation with it nor his desire to vindicate it and justify it. Briefly stated he wanted to think becoming free of at least two things: 1) free of the relation to an existent ground, any kind of "being", outside the process of becoming, whether this be the Platonic form or the witnessing creator god, and 2) free of subordination to any final aim of goal whether this be salvation or some kind of nirvana, free, in fact, of any goal anywhere at all. The "positive" side of these two things, in Nietzsche's own words, what becoming is not free from, but for, would be: 1) there is nothing outside the whole, outside this world; this world itself, as it is, is perfect in a non-moral sense and has no further need of anything, and 2) nothing exists primarily for the sake of anything else. In short, the world is neither imperfect or subordinate.  

One of the ways 'becoming' in my paintings is represented is by showing something that is only partially revealed and barely defined in special imaginative terms. Other works for example The Innocents places the figures against enigmatic backgrounds designed to place them outside history. A suggestion of timelessness is enacted. See Innocent II, 1999, where the figure is clothed in a manner that might belong to an historical epoch. The background suggests both a rugged landscape dominated by a storm-strewn sky or is it a strip of fabric forming a backdrop to a stage performance? Is the human being an actor? A role player? Does what one does in life

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3 Alan D. Schrift, "Nietzsche's Contest: Nietzsche and the Culture Wars" Why Nietzsche Still?: Reflections on Drama, Culture and Politics, London, University of California Press, 2000, p. 120  
4 Joan Stambaugh, "Thoughts on the Innocence of Becoming", Nietzsche-Studien, Band, 14, 1985, pp. 164-178. On average Nietzsche uses the term 'becoming' twenty or more times in each of his works. They inevitably reflect the concerns identified by Stamborough, for example, see Nietzsche'sEcce Homo, p. 51 where the term emphasizes "a radical rejection even of the concept of being," and Nietzsche'sThe Gay Science, p. 329 where Nietzsche talks of the danger of taking on roles and seeing them as truth rather than transitory and the results of caprice and chance. Also Nietzsche'sTwilight of the Idols, p. 54, which focuses on how accepting that one is part of the whole, that nothing exists outside the whole, that first causes cannot be found and that me is not "accountable" means that one is liberated and therefore have an "innocence of becoming." The sub-title of my thesis, "the innocence of becoming" indicates that my paintings,
as a vocation equal what one is? Do we “become” a “role”? What is the relationship between appearance and reality? She might be walking on a highway or in a desert but the suggestion of a curtain displaces certainty about where she is. She seems uncomfortable in her shirt; is it a costume? Is it disheveled due to some activity?5

The “innocence of becoming” present in these works, as endemic to Nietzsche’s writings, refers to my view that the world is ‘all right as it is’ and that there is no Platonic or Judeo-Christian standard to judge and condemn it.6 Nevertheless as Staumbaugh points out “innocence” implies a consciousness of some kind and my adoption of Nietzsche’s term requires further explanation. “Innocence of becoming” implies new interpretations of a world formerly understood within a Christian framework that pitted good against evil and which drew into its moral view all of history. In Thus Spake Zarathustra Nietzsche makes the final metamorphosis of the spirit, the child. It is only the child that is innocent and forgetful, “a new beginning, a play, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a holy yea-saying.” Only the child can create something new.

“Innocence of becoming” in the first instance entails a freedom from final goals, in fact any goal at all. It is also a freedom from a belief in first causes, in God, and in history as the provider of meaning. This “innocence” is not childhood “ignorance”; it is arrived at after it has been lost and then regained. It is regained only after departing from the fables and facing the abyss anew. The innocent child is unencumbered by the weight of the past, and this is how Nietzsche is using the term when applied to adults in the “innocence of becoming”. The truly creative person, according to Nietzsche, has no revenge against time; her work is not predicated on the stories of the past. Staumbaugh quotes Zarathustra when he asks, “where is innocence?” She writes, “Thus, we see that innocence does not mean staging the same, remaining as you are, but precisely the opposite, innocence is desire lies in the will to transcendence, to create beyond oneself.”7

My paintings incorporate Nietzsche’s rejection of an ideal that allows one to stay the same. “Innocence” lies in escaping precious, pristine states, and instead being

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5 For example, The Sanitarium and The Unity, the paintings anticipate that the viewer conceives of a “Whole” coming into being despite the presentation of partial beings, or hidden presence.
6 Staumbaugh, ibid., p. 165.
8 Staumbaugh, p. 176.
in change, transformation, even at times loss, relinquishing something, being destroyed, going under but nevertheless relentlessly following desire in living, that is being in a state of becoming. The world for an artist therefore is open to new interpretations of all occurrences. This occurs in play. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche writes, “I know of no other way to deal with great tasks than play; this is a sign of greatness.”\(^9\) Innocence of becoming involves playing with the holy, to create anew without reference to the past world theories.

De Chirico painted within a secular environment and, like Nietzsche, pursued art as a means of knowing possible truths. He, like Nietzsche, explored knowingly the Apollonian and Dionysian duality, seeking relentlessly a means of their impossible unification. His displacement of objects in illogical spaces, his drawing on knowledge endemic to Italian politics and his interest in classical mythology draw attention not only to the ‘extraordinary’ within the ‘ordinary’, but also, like Nietzsche, draw on new interplays of objects and space and history and myth, that take the viewer to an experience of ‘enigma’ within the secular world. The philosophical relationship I set up in this thesis between de Chirico and Nietzsche is one which provides a context for my own work. In exploring this context I am arguing ways in which art might be communicated in words; that is, I am attempting to demonstrate that art has a philosophical context in which it can be spoken about. It is not the case that I can reduce my work to ‘words’, in the sense that I can say this painting means something in particular. I can, however, explore the ways in which de Chirico’s work can be seen in a philosophical context of Nietzschean perspectivism. If I am successful in illuminating this relationship, this research is also arguing that my own work, in its form and content, in its use of metaphor, in its implementation of enigmatic images, might also be understood within the same context.

**Giorgio de Chirico and Enigma**

The Italian painter Giorgio de Chirico is widely considered the originator of the 20th Century Italian art movement *Pittura Metafisica*, yet his place in history and the worth of his overall output is the subject of vastly different viewpoints. *Pittura Metafisica* or Metaphysical Painting is characterized by a visual sense of mystery and enigma, yet it is difficult to identify the enigmatic qualities that make de Chirico’s work mysterious and evocative. The paintings appear to be quite a straightforward depiction of reality, so in

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\(^9\) Quoted in Stambaugh, p. 177.
order to gain an insight into de Chirico’s vision, I have taken his paintings and writings in tandem to elucidate the artist’s aesthetic principles.

However, this exploration of the nature of enigma, which is the core quality of metaphysical painting, will also show the connection between the philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Giorgio de Chirico. In particular, nine of the artist’s paintings will be used as a model to investigate the intersection of Nietzschean themes in de Chirico’s visual schema. Alongside these paintings I will nominate a number of my own paintings that demonstrate a commonality of interests, while also showing that my own work references enduring, metaphysical iconography. My use of spatial themes, curtained spaces and partially obscured archetypical figures all have connections to these visual themes.

While de Chirico claimed inspiration from Nietzsche, it is his interpretation of Nietzsche’s writings on creative unity that is specifically relevant here. Nietzsche’s idea was based on the symbolic creative unity of the Greek gods Apollo and Dionysus. Each god’s role and de Chirico’s use of it are outlined in greater detail in the following chapter. The artist’s synthesis of this creative unity has proven a valuable, creative model for the schemata of my own imagery. As an example, in my paintings (which constitute in practice the central concern of this thesis) I have used the curtains as symbolic of a moment of possible revelation when the Apollonian and Dionysian interplay may, but does not take place.

By tracing the aesthetic origins of de Chirico’s work and shedding new interpretive light on its significance, it is possible to show that a philosophical perspective can be successfully used for interpreting visual enigma.

Despite a wealth of critical analysis, the meaning and intention of de Chirico’s images is still subject to considerable speculation. They continue to be regarded, in the words of the German scholar Willard Bohn, “as largely resistant to interpretation”. Analysis of his paintings has ranged from the psychoanalytic to the political, with the breadth of interpretation by commentators a factor contributing to their categorization. De Chirico’s younger brother, Alberto Savinio, considered metaphysical painting to be a “way of seeing”, yet such comments only contribute to vagaries of the term.

I discuss the division of de Chirico’s work into early and late periods only when it contributes to the primary research concerns. While I do not intend to enter the debate as to whether de Chirico’s later work was seriously flawed in several respects, nevertheless, in the choice of images to be studied, the standard divisions of de Chirico’s creative works are explicitly challenged. However, my primary research concern is not with this but with de Chirico’s interpretation of Nietzschean themes, an interpretation that demonstrates the artist’s loyalty to consistently enigmatic imagery. I will also apply a similar interpretation to an analysis of my own imagery.

1.1 Giorgio de Chirico and Metaphysical Painting

The difficulty in defining both Metaphysical Painting and the resultant enigmatic qualities has meant investigating the origins and qualities of the style. It has also involved, at least briefly, showing de Chirico’s pre-eminent role in the movement’s inception. Chapter two outlines the nature of metaphysical imagery, the visual qualities of enigma and how de Chirico has integrated these with Nietzschean themes. As one historian, Caroline Tisdall, has stated, Metaphysical Painting does not form “an extensive formal movement”. Tisdall considers that “it represented a state of mind common to a group of painters for whom the plastic reappraisal of reality . . . was less important than a reallocation of reality’s component parts.”¹² This reallocation of components of reality is a core quality in Metaphysical Painting and it is the characteristic that provides a nexus between specific philosophical concerns and de Chirico’s imagery. It is also the ingredient that produces the characteristic enigmatic imagery.

The movement’s inception and de Chirico’s role in defining the style is also briefly discussed in chapter two along with the background to de Chirico’s relationship with Nietzsche’s creative ideas. It is widely accepted that de Chirico’s style evolved from a Nordic metaphysical strain, characterized by the works of Alfred Kubin, Max Klinger and Arnold Böcklin.¹² This metaphysical strain included not only painters but also the philosophical writings of Arthur Schopenhauer, the Austrian philosopher, Otto Weininger, and most particularly the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche. Early references to both Weininger and Schopenhauer can be found in de Chirico’s writings and, while not central here, they indicate the early influences that led de Chirico to Nietzsche.¹⁴

¹² ibid.
¹³ ibid.
These artists and thinkers were important in forming de Chirico’s aesthetic register, although their influence faded over time. However, it was the discovery of Nietzsche that essentially enabled de Chirico to find visual form for his philosophical interests, and it is therefore this link that I focus on in the exegesis.\(^{15}\)

1.2 Nietzschean Themes in Giorgio de Chirico’s Imagery

De Chirico’s identification with Nietzsche’s creative ideas is used as a visual framework for discussion of the artist’s paintings, with the interdependent nature of Nietzsche’s creative unity fully discussed in Chapter 2. Friedrich Nietzsche’s ideas on the symbolic role of Apollo and Dionysos evolved considerably throughout his life, but it is his early discussion, particularly the one explored in The Birth of Tragedy, that has informed this research.

From the early work and continuing through a long career de Chirico made numerous references to Nietzsche. As well as the artist’s comments, various historians have recognized the connections to Nietzsche in both De Chirico’s early and late work. Soby was particularly insightful about the enigmatic mood of de Chirico’s work. “We only have to look at any one of de Chirico’s early paintings to see that they propose a Nietzschean counter-reality based on reverie, incantation and dreams.”\(^{16}\) Soby identifies the subject of reality as a core element in de Chirico’s metaphysical imagery, highlighting the accompanying elements these subjects raise. Other contemporary historians like Ivor Davies noted the consistency of de Chirico’s subject matter in relation to Nietzsche: “The suggestion for de Chirico’s principal subjects, the architectural squares of Italy and the metaphysical still lifes and mannequin figures, (were) also prompted by Nietzsche.”\(^{17}\) The Italian writer and art dealer, Paolo Baldacci, considers that “cryptic allusions to philosophical truths became frequent in de Chirico’s later work, in many cases constituting a literal interpretation of Nietzsche’s doctrine.”\(^{18}\)

By referring to de Chirico’s own writings throughout this exegesis, I hope to provide a deeper meaning of the debt to Nietzsche, at the same time as showing my own use and connection to this philosophical meaning in my imagery. I have taken de

\(^{15}\) ibid., p. 16.
\(^{16}\) ibid.
\(^{17}\) Ivor Davies, “Giorgio de Chirico: The Sources of Metaphysical Painting in Schopenhauer and Nietzsche”, Art International XXVIII, January/March, 1989, p. 53.
Chirico’s Nietzschean themes and recognised their reverberations in my own enigmatic work. My use of the revelatory curtains along with the use of the mystical horses all arise from classical themes that overlap with de Chirico’s concerns. Nietzsche’s views on the Apollonian-Dionysian unity in art, defined broadly in Chapter 2, is subsequently applied to the select imagery.

1.3 De Chirico’s Symbolic Paintings

This exegesis examines the following nine paintings that are numbered and included for reference at the conclusion of the exegesis:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>The Soothsayer’s Recompense, 1913</td>
</tr>
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<td>Piazza d’Italia, 1937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Red Tower (fig.18), 1913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Enigma of the Day, 1914</td>
</tr>
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<td>Double Self-Portrait, 1924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Two Sisters, 1915</td>
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<td>The Meditation of Mercury, 1934</td>
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Accompanying this discourse will be a selection of my own paintings: The Dream; The Mysterious Union; Marriage; The Unity; L’innocente/The illusion; The Dioscuri (Lady with a Horse); The Eternal Turin, The Poem; and The Sanitarium.

De Chirico’s paintings were selected because they are from different periods over the artist’s career and also because each work is representative of the characteristics of de Chirico’s metaphysical style as well as typifying the artist’s visual themes. I argue that these works show that while the artist explored various ideas, he was essentially consistent in his pursuit of these themes.

I have chosen not to include paintings that clearly incorporate the same recurrent symbols. Instead, I have selected paintings where the common and connecting symbols are less apparent. As a consequence, in the discussion below I have grouped the paintings in a way that brings out these unifying symbols. This also reveals
the way in which these symbols intersect with Nietzschean themes. In other words, the grouping of work has been based on symbolic content that is common to all works in the group, but not explicitly so. This is also true of the selection of my own work for discussion. Throughout my own paintings I was concerned with the enduring classical visual motifs that by completing this research, enabled me to discover the origins of and connections to particular philosophical thinking. I have painted these themes for many years and it was a valuable outcome for me to explore the underlying sources of these themes.

**Ariadne: The Enigmatic Figure**

Ariadne has always had great symbolic importance to me. My master's thesis was concerned primarily with this mythical character. Many years of psychoanalysis have dealt with my childhood, that involved being alienated and subject to various forms of abuse. I do not believe an autobiographical journey across a terrain of childhood pain is an authentic way to explain possibly indirect reference I made to her. Nevertheless, given that Ariadne is subject to rejection and is saved by the creative spirit of Dionysos, it is an interesting parable to allude to when viewing my figures. My figures, like Ariadne, are represented in dream states. They exist in space that is "no longer ... and not yet". They are in a space, if one might allude to such autobiographical detail, of rejection or awaiting a place in which to be re-born. They therefore do not meet the gaze of the onlooker, and nor is it relevant that they can be seen as either male or female. The figures, however, from my perspective do not have gender ambiguity. I have always known which of them is male or female. More importantly, they are innocents in the process of becoming, at a moment of possible revelation. Despite the figurative nature of my paintings, I have been concerned for some time with de Chirico's advice to expunge the representation of figure. My figures have been created as a symbol of a philosophical viewpoint and to this end have avoided any connection to gender, portrait use or likeness. These figures are embodiments of a philosophical moment. It has always intrigued me that Nietzsche, in his letters to Cosima Wagner, refers to her as his Ariadne whom he wishes to save in the guise of Dionysos. My figures, on the other hand, although they may hold old memories of rejection, as represented in my paintings, have moved to a position of being saved by Dionysian revelation. The curtains in my painting point to this theatrical event, but they may either close or open.

The discussion of work begins in Chapter three with the Ariadne series. These specifically explore de Chirico's re-interpretation of the figure. They consider the way
the artist translated particular philosophical ideas into imagery in an attempt to resolve the visual problems in representation and reality, particularly in figuration. They show a novel and enigmatic representation of figuration, one that addresses the inevitable idealization that results in such figurative and classical allusions.

Ariadne is also used to explore the symbolic development of de Chirico's enigmatic style and she is treated in terms of his declared aesthetic schema, evident in the contemporizing of both the statue of Ariadne and the myth. The Ariadne statue explores both the artist's personal symbolism and her symbolic power while also showing de Chirico's concern with Greek mythology. The artist's selection of Ariadne suggests both eternal presence by the classical references and eternal illusion by showing a contemporary world inhabited by past world symbols. Throughout my own work classical references can be seen in such paintings as The Dioscuri, which indirectly refers to the story in which the twin gods were given horses by Hermes. In this painting, the disunity is alluded to by the presence of only one horse, rather than a pair. The figure has closed eyes, while her hand gestures against the moment of knowing and simultaneously she is in a nascent state that pre-empts her possible 'becoming'. However, my use of the horse not only draws on the ancient myth. It appears in many of my paintings and is a personal visual emblem which, in the Nietzschean sense, would be compromised if reduced to a causal or affective relationship. Horses also represent for me the magic that comes from a sense of flight and freedom. Holding a tiny horse in their hands, these figures may feel that they will have, finally, access to this magical freedom.

The discussion of imagery begins with Ariadne in The Soothsayer's Recompense showing the figurative illusions within a Nietzschean perspective, treating her as a kind of will to illusion. A later work, Piazza d'Italia, shows how Ariadne obviously occupied a persistent hold on de Chirico, both visually and symbolically, for he revisited the subject consistently over his career. Ariadne's durability and suggestive presence is considered in the light of their relationship to Nietzsche, his creative unity and the ultimate connection to Dionysian ideas.

The Enigma of the Day

De Chirico's political and philosophical use of statues and figurative constructs is discussed in terms of their sources with specific reference to The Enigma of the Day and The Red Tower (fig.18). The nineteenth-century frock-coated figure that inhabits de
Chirico’s empty piazzas is shown to project a many-layered significance. These figurative shadows have been traced to figures from the Risorgimento and Greek mythology but I consider their overriding interpretation to lie with Nietzsche’s creative unity. I have included the background visual research that supports de Chirico’s fusion of a multitude of historical figures from the Risorgimento. The artist camouflaged and personalized these figures yet they all demonstrate a debt to history, the classical past and ultimately to Apollo and Dionysos.

De Chirico’s selection of the Italian city of Turin is examined in the light of his enthusiasm for this city and its link to Nietzsche. The combination of these elements enabled de Chirico to mythologize a location. The numerous homogenized towers in de Chirico’s paintings, like the Mole Antonellia have been discussed as integrated components of the artist’s vision of Turin. The art historian, Emily Braun, identifies the element of time in de Chirico’s works, suggesting that by the manipulation of “elements of antiquity and modern industry” de Chirico was able to create an “illogical world without spatial or temporal coherence, where the normally consoling aspects of everyday objects have been unsettled and the familiar rendered strange.”19 Although my own work is not concerned with such historical and political visual references, like de Chirico I juxtapose elements that have little temporal or spatial coherence. This is a means of relocating what is usually conceived of as empirical (observable) reality. In works of mine, such as The Dream or The Dioscuri, I have used the juxtaposition of illogical scale and relationship as a device to unsettle the logic of the image. While my logic in these choices may not be immediately apparent, the philosophical significance of the horses (as outlined earlier) contributes to the overall enigmatic content of the image and possible ‘meaning’ of the painting.

De Chirico’s choice of statuary is a clue to the way he constructs his enigmatic images, particularly in the way these figures are presented. The motionless statues of myth or politics that inhabit many of de Chirico paintings play a number of roles. Whether we see recumbent or standing figures in solitary squares, or whether they only cast shadows, the viewer is drawn to their isolated mood and seemingly life-like plight. How does de Chirico manage to imbue these lifeless statues or mannequins with human, almost tragic emotions? And how does he engage them in an Apollonian-Dionysian

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drama? These questions are central to my research and central to the way I use the stationary, stillness in my own figuration.

Dualities

De Chirico's use of dualities is discussed with *The Two Masks, Double Self-Portrait* and *The Meditation of Mercury*. We directly encounter the Nietzschean duality of Apollo and Dionysos. De Chirico's use of this duality is itself double, in that he asserts Nietzsche's thesis concerning the combination of opposing forces in Greek tragedy and the further claim that in the modern era, this unity is no longer possible. The discussion of these works attempts to show the common ground between Nietzsche and de Chirico, the relentless struggle for creative unity between these two aesthetic forces. My own work, like de Chirico's, expresses this struggle, and its failure in purely visual terms.

We see a range of dualities in these paintings, some superficially conform to logical appearance, while others lack a temporal consistency. The inconsistency of representation inevitably affects the way we respond to these images. It highlights what de Chirico called the eternal life of objects and what the French scholar Marielle Rainbow-Vigourt has called the "privileging of the internal". Her term can be transposed to Nietzschean thought where the "internal" can be seen to correspond to the oneness and indeterminateness in Dionysian terms. I argue that recognizing the duality of these Apollonian-Dionysian spheres gives access to de Chirico's enigmatic imagery and allows the illogicality of the images not only to be acceptable but even consoling. By de Chirico's combination of philosophy and imagery, he activates a number of levels of aesthetic awareness. This method is particularly relevant in the dualism of these images and their combination of symbols of antiquity and modernism. There are a number of my works that describe sleeping/dreaming figures or else figures in a transcendent state with their eyes closed. *The Dream, The Dioscuri* and *The Flag* show both the external reality of the sleeping figure and the internal vision of the transported figure. I have specifically presented figures with closed eyes to link these figures with the metaphysical world.

Ulysses and The Mysterious Bathhouses

Two late works of the artist, *The Return of Ulysses* and *The Mysterious Bathhouses* (fig.44) were selected for their mythological content and Nietzschean perspective as
well as to demonstrate the consistency of thematic concerns of the artist. De Chirico has used respectively the Apollonian and Dionysian symbols in these works, so Ulysses' voyage across a modern living-room appears as a philosophical portrait of contemporary man. *Ulysses* is also an example of the artist's portrayal of furniture. Anthropomorphizing and personalizing various objects give symbolic meaning to the non-figurative elements within the image.

The *Bathhouse* painting shows the artist's life-long compositional consistency and thematic concerns taken to mysterious and enigmatic extremes. The unusual and mysterious shapes that occupy the foreground of this particular work are interpreted within the Apollonian-Dionysian framework and are shown to have a long heritage within the artist's work. All the seminal conceptual and compositional elements are revisited yet the work seems to reach a peak of mystery and symbolism, one that epitomizes a struggle. These works particularly were ones that gave me greater insight into my own approach to enigmatic painting. It was the radical illogicality, yet the profoundly moving content, that enabled me to question my own work in terms of pictorial logic. Nowhere does de Chirico give an indication of the meaning of these works, yet throughout them is a wealth of meaning.

1.4 The Relationship of My Imagery to Enigma

There are aspects of de Chirico's work that connect to my own exploration of visual enigma and which are reasons for my choosing him as a model for investigation. Firstly, I found that rather than consider the specific iconography of de Chirico's visual enigma and how it affected my own imagery, I would question the nature and origins of de Chirico's oeuvre. This is turn constitutes a contextualisation of my work, philosophically and aesthetically. Most analysis of the artist's ideas and imagery is framed within the conventions of a linear progression. Yet my response to de Chirico as an artist (and I would say to paintings generally) is related purely to the content of the image. Aesthetically, it seems to have little influence or effect upon me whether a work is earlier or later in the time-line of an artist's career. Many years ago I first saw de Chirico's so-called "later works" in a German catalogue. It was the force of the imagery that affected me strongly rather than the chronological position of that work. As an artist I did not at the time understand why these works were segregated and classified in a different way. My subsequent research provided me with the reasons underlying the connections in all his work, and in my own. De Chirico's dealing with

20 Marielle Blanche Alice Rainbow-Vigour, *The Vision of Giorgio de Chirico in Painting*
enigma is not unrelated to what I see as Nietzsche's vision, that in a secular world all traditional beliefs (moral, epistemological) are problematic, merely interpretations rather than truths. De Chirico's dramatization of the disunity of the Apollonian and Dionysian duality is central to this debate. Nietzsche's perspectivism, which was new to philosophical thought, and which exists in all his writings, focuses on the idea that there is no such thing as truth; all is interpretation. This vision is evident early on in de Chirico's career and characterises much of his work.

Another influence de Chirico's method had upon me was in the way in which he examined his own use of image and reality. I found that in the exploration of the observably real I could question my previous treatment of apparent reality. This questioning affected subject matter in particular. In works such as The Mysterious Union and The Unity I chose to exclude the figure almost entirely. The dissolution of the figure was a way for me to activate the interpretative nature of truth. I wanted no portraits as such and have always questioned the idea of truth in portraiture. Portraiture or likeness has never interested me as an idea because of its allusion to truth.

Another influence de Chirico's method had upon me was the consideration of my own reappraisal of apparent reality. My imagery has always explored the dynamic that exists in representations of the ordinary, which evoke the extraordinary. A core quality often discussed in de Chirico's work is the way that his paintings often describe an ordinary street scene or show a simple square with a statue, yet evoke a potent sense of disquiet and unease. In my own work I was also interested in the disquiet of the ordinary and how it translated into an enigmatic mood. I have therefore chosen to consider not only my own imagery but also to examine the nature and origins of de Chirico's imagery and, by so doing, recognise the common themes of this genre. As a consequence, the detailed analysis of de Chirico's intellectual and aesthetic stimuli has given greater depth to an understanding of my own imagery.

While my images are constructed around an exploration of the internal, spectral and enigmatic, I have always attempted to use the real world and its objects. This is the core connection I have with de Chirico's ideas and why exploring the foundation of his treatment of reality is of such value to me. In my own work I have visually juxtaposed objects so as to question superficial appearances, in an attempt to make apparent their internal significance. Throughout this thesis I will include, alongside my analysis of de Chirico, elements of my own work.

1.5 Thematic and Stylistic Consistency in De Chirico’s Vision

While de Chirico’s integration of Nietzschean themes can be seen to produce the plurality of thought usually associated with theories of post-structuralism, it is not the only method of understanding his achievement. In fact, a discussion and analysis of this interpretation would require much more space than is possible here, and also a discussion not pertinent to my exegesis. But the shortcoming of using only this interpretation is exemplified by the attention his later work was given in the 1980s, where it was valued only within a postmodern framework as pastiche or, worse, parody. Brooke Adams demonstrates the weakness of the popular kitsch attitude and exemplifies how little of de Chirico’s classical allusions can be drawn from it, when she writes, “De Chirico’s adorably long-maned horses and soft nude warriors by the seashore are just the thing for a generation raised on Barbie dolls.”21

Investigating de Chirico’s references is important for locating him conceptually and also for understanding his historical position, particularly his early success. For de Chirico’s early success was not necessarily due to a critical grasp of his specific ideas. From the beginning the artist’s work was viewed as powerful and mysterious but largely impenetrable, while his later work was seen as both impenetrable and creatively weak. The criticism of this later work centred on the neo-Baroque style and classical subject matter the artist explored. As a consequence his career has historically been compartmentalized into early success and later failure. Soby typifies the commonly accepted view.

In reverting above all to Baroque tradition, which he once held in contempt, devoting much of his energy to violent attacks on the twentieth century visual revolution of which he was once an irreplaceable leader, de Chirico tried with every means at his power to obliterate his own brilliant youth.22

In the 1920s de Chirico began exploring the technical and stylistic concerns of painting and as a consequence he was regarded as a spent force creatively. Yet criticism of him has failed to recognize the congruence in this, particularly the way he continued a contemporary interpretation of classical themes. His desire to be known as a classical painter, remembering his own term Pictor Classicus Sum, is a key element in

22 James Thrall Soby’s two monographs on de Chirico are still the major texts on the artist’s work. Soby, G. de Chirico, op. cit., p. 162.
the imagery.\footnote{G. de Chirico, Memoirs, London, Peter Owen, 1976, p. 116.} If the origins of de Chirico's aesthetics are recognized, including his formative comments about Nietzsche and Greek philosophy, it is possible to see that his concerns have remained consistent, despite there being a lot of variety in his style. Throughout the research it has been important to consider his creative framework as one that maintained a unique and consistent focus. Rather than viewing his various stylistic shifts as a betrayal of his earlier, creative brilliance, we can see these shifts as aspects of his consistent themes. Whereas the criticism of de Chirico has been predicated on the view that his earlier brilliance subsequently collapsed, followed by unimaginative and repetitive imagery, this research argues for both the recognition and understanding of his early influences as a key to his entire artistic quest.\footnote{Typical of this critical appraisal is Claude Ginzé, "The Good, The Bad and the Ugly", Art in America 71, Summer, 1983, pp. 105 - 108.}

Repetitive imagery exists within many possible contexts. A reverberating echo throughout a life's word reminds us of how individual lives are indeed unique. Artists place their puzzles into new configurations not so much to emphasize a preoccupation but rather to explore possible ways of breaking through its mystery. I hesitate to find words for what might be seen as my repetitive images, as their value exists in their unfathomable and enigmatic qualities that, when implemented in new environments, awaken further creative responses. I have been surprised when the critical response to my paintings has been concerned with the variety of subject matter as well as the repetition of subject matter. My aim in the imagery has always been to provide a mood around the object rather than be concerned with superficial appearance.

Aside from the self-portraits, which are examined as a form of reconsidering identity, the Pittura Metafisica imagery will be used to establish that de Chirico's themes are coherent and consistent. This approach provides a broader understanding of the artist's vision and presents an aesthetically unified vision. Furthermore, it releases his work from the opaque and fractured position it has critically occupied. These arguments will also demonstrate that de Chirico's achievement as an artist was to integrate philosophy, myth and history, creating an oeuvre that is illuminating despite its overriding enigma.
Metaphysical Painting and Nietzschean Themes

He looks at a group of objects on a table with the same emotion that struck the heart of an ancient Greek traveller when he looked at woods, valleys and mountains, which were held to be the haunts of the most beautiful and strange divinities. He looks with the eye of a man who believes, and the skeleton that lies under these things - that seem for us to be dead because they are immobile - appears to him in its most consoling aspect: its eternal aspect.

Giorgio de Chirico in M. Carrá, *Metaphysical Art*

Among the numerous descriptions of Metaphysical Painting the most commonly defined quality is one of enigma. Its originator, Giorgio de Chirico, spoke initially of finding the "daemon in everything." The writer, Massimo Carrá, characterized this idea as the "mysterious appearance concealed behind every object (that) is revealed to the artist in magical moments of his creative contemplation." In describing the nature of Metaphysical Painting and its relationship to enigma it is important to trace briefly the movement's origins.

In her introduction to *Metaphysical Art* Caroline Tisdall gives a brief summary of the claims and counter claims associated with the movement's inception, particularly the rivalry that existed between the Italian artist Carlo Carrá and Giorgio de Chirico. Tisdall says Metaphysical Painting has been "confused by the deliberately misleading accounts of it written by its two main exponents, Giorgio de Chirico and Carlo Carrá, both of who claimed the entire credit for its invention." While it is accepted they both made enigmatic images together in Ferrara during World War One, the evidence substantiates de Chirico's earlier claim for primacy, perhaps as early as 1909. After working together in Ferrara, Carrá returned to Milan with his metaphysical paintings and organized a solo exhibition. Even though de Chirico argued, rightly, that he had "painted metaphysical paintings in Paris several years earlier and that they had been exhibited, reproduced and sold."  

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When de Chirico first began painting it was the Swiss painter Arnold Böcklin who most influenced him. Böcklin was also interested in the writings of Nietzsche and his works of mythical scenes have an Italianate mood combined with a "sense of surprise and unease" in their classical content. This sense of surprise has been recognized as another characteristic of metaphysical painting. The scholar James Thrall Soby viewed the shrouded figures in early de Chirico paintings as arising from a Böcklinesque heritage and considered that whereas Böcklin had evolved an essentially Germanic kind of painting from an Italianate vision, de Chirico was presently to create a thoroughly Italian art from a German metaphysical premise.

De Chirico's fusion of these metaphysical strains contributed to what became understood as the visual characteristics of enigma. These have been described variously by many writers but all consistently recognize common themes, a sense of mystery and surprise, crystallized by the disruption of logic, despite the apparent reality. I will argue that these qualities reveal the overlapping threads that link de Chirico's imagery with Nietzsche.

De Chirico recognized this visual quality of surprise in his reading of Nietzsche and it becomes an obvious source for his image making. De Chirico himself describes this connection.

When Nietzsche talks of how Zarathustra was conceived, he says, "I was surprised by Zarathustra" in this participle is contained the whole enigma of sudden revelation.

The artist recognized that his process of "abnormal moments in creative contemplation" was linked to the philosopher's revelatory process. So if de Chirico is the originator and successful exponent of enigmatic imagery and surprise, in the revelatory sense, what then is the content of this quality? Why do Giorgio de Chirico's images stand as the most noted and significant realization of this form? What is the combination of visual elements in de Chirico that result in enigmatic images? And how does it make, in the words of the historian Milly Heyd, "each of Giorgio de Chirico's paintings present an undeciphered enigma, a mystery that abundant literature devoted to his art fails to illuminate adequately."

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29 Soby, *G. de Chirico*, op. cit., p. 16.
It is the case that within my own artistic production I have known this revelatory surprise and recognized it as a moment that comes from a composite of image, philosophical insight, an excitement in the power of the artistic process and yet, almost simultaneously, a refusal of the revelation to give that a name. Instead one is taken into the heart of a mystery and briefly knows oneself anew. The difficulty then is for me, the artist, to describe in words this revelatory surprise when it occurs. The struggle is to achieve it in the paintings and trust that the viewer experiences it also.

The philosopher, Arthur Danto, offers a clue when, on the role of paintings, he argues that this "expanded notion of artistic experience," shows that the possibilities of paintings are "more than things to be looked at and understood" and "like the viewers they transform, paintings themselves are embodied meanings." This argument of transformation within meaning gives a framework for viewing de Chirico’s imagery. Visual enigma is able both to play the traditional role of narrative imagery, and also to be an experience that may remain enigmatic to the viewer. Visual enigma’s significant qualities are therefore felt as well as seen, remaining enigmatic because, as Rainbow-Vigourt observes, they "indicate a relation rather than a substance" and therefore require viewing to complete the experience.

When the influences from Arnold Böcklin faded, de Chirico "began to paint subjects in which [he] tried to express the strong and mysterious feeling [he] had discovered in the books of Nietzsche: the melancholy of beautiful autumn days, afternoons in Italian cities." De Chirico acknowledged his own stimulus from his reading of Nietzsche during these early years of aesthetic formation. He also felt the value of connecting these ideas to his imagery. "During a trip I made to Rome in October, after having read the works of Friedrich Nietzsche, I became aware that there is a host of strange unknown, solitary things which can be translated into painting."

According to Tisdall, de Chirico found in Nietzsche’s writings “confirmation of his own melancholy and mystical tendencies”. These tendencies are seen in both the discussion of apparent reality and the "poetic reappraisal of everyday objects and scenes to reveal the more profound meaning beneath superficial appearances".

If we accept the possibility of a more profound meaning to be found in or behind the apparent reality portrayed in de Chirico's work, then it follows that the surface appearance of reality has to serve as a key entry point to this deeper meaning. Therefore, in the interdependent relationship or interplay between deeper meaning and apparent reality in these works, we find a general feature of de Chirico's visual enigma.

This idea opens up a number of interpretative approaches, making it necessary not only to look at what other commentators saw in de Chirico's imagery, but also to consider the actual content and context of this work. While I have not been able to prove this, I believe that by questioning apparent reality in this way, de Chirico managed to secure a formal technique to express this philosophical thesis concerning the nature of reality in his imagery throughout his entire oeuvre. From its beginnings, enigmatic imagery has been connected with fundamental philosophical concepts.38 So the problems for de Chirico of reality and appearance could be resolved by combining his way of seeing with, in Tisdall's words, "the subtler grasp of the power of jarred reality, strange juxtapositions that are potent because they seem credible."39 If this is so, then this very credibility in the imagery requires analysis, one that details the visual motifs and symbolism selected by the artist.

If we accept that the connection between de Chirico and Nietzschean themes lies in the discussion of reality, then it is possible to see that the imagery hinges on a view of the seemingly real world (that is, recognizable places and objects) which simultaneously dislocates our perception of that world. We see solitary statues, steaming trains in desolate piazzas, abandoned pieces of fruit, which all seems to unsettle our vision and at some level occupy the realm of illusion. This illusion is, in the Nietzschean sense, dream-images that we "are required to see as empirical reality", for initially de Chirico's images give the impression of conventional reality.40 So the disjunction of apparent reality can be seen as de Chirico's use of a Nietzschean aesthetic, most specifically of the ideas proposed for a creative condition discussed in *The Birth of Tragedy*. The most significant Nietzschean idea for de Chirico is that of the combination of Apollonian and Dionysian, and, as we will see, in the failure of that unity.

In *The Birth of Tragedy* the Apollonian-Dionysian idea views creation as a product of violence and combat. Nietzsche sees these outcomes as resulting from the

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38 Baldacci, *De Chirico and Savinio*, op. cit., p. 65.
39 Tisdall in Carrá, *Metaphysical Art*, op. cit., p. 8
conflict between Apollonian illusion and Dionysian intoxication and oneness. For Nietzsche, the Apollonian sphere is one of dream-illusion and individuation whereas Dionysos generally represents destruction, ecstasy and the primal oneness. Thus, in understanding de Chirico’s use of these illusions, it is important to recognize the representative qualities of the Apollonian-Dionysian, so as to gain “a sense of the mystery of that union”. The characteristics of this unity can be seen in the symbolic network that de Chirico uses to symbolize their presence. Therefore, Nietzsche’s theory is used throughout this exegesis as a framework for the aesthetic discussion of de Chirico’s work, and the selected paintings and their symbolic iconography are considered within this framework.

In essence Apollo represents form-giving qualities. How are these qualities transposed into de Chirico’s visual symbolism? To recognize the artist’s use of Nietzschean ideas it is valuable to describe Nietzsche’s views. The central idea is that creation is a product of violence or combat, “that art derives its continuous development from the duality of the Apollonian and Dionysian.” Nietzsche identifies Apollo’s qualities of illusion and individuation.

Apollo, the deity of all plastic forces, is also the soothsaying god. . . the deity of light . . . we might even describe Apollo as the glorious divine image of the *principium individuationis*, from whose gestures and looks all the delight, wisdom and beauty of illusion speak to us.

So Apollonian dreaming, while being experienced, is also illusion and transitory appearance. Its passing nature is also what makes it the substance of art and poetry, so “Apollo perpetually makes the world visible and present through eternal illumination. Thus while Apollo means dreaming and all imagistic art, he also means the world as appearance, in the sense of both eternal presence and eternal illusion.”

Nietzsche’s description of the Dionysian experience, particularly in the way Dionysos eliminates all idea of discrete entities is of vital significance. Dionysos represents the world of intoxication, eliminating all sense of individuation and

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41 ibid.
42 ibid., p. 14.
43 *principium individuationis*: the principle of individuation. This is Schopenhauer’s term for the way in which all our experiences comes to us parcelled up, especially including our awareness of ourselves. It is therefore, for and for Nietzsche in *Birth of Tragedy*, illusory, since reality is undifferentiated, ibid., p. 119.
in its place he generates feelings of indeterminate formlessness and of the oneness of the universe. All that exists as discrete and individualized entities is abolished here and replaced with a sense of the primordial nature of archetypal, unchanging experience that have always been and will continue to be the same over time. Here individual life forms are felt to belong to the eternal stream of nature that is the undercurrent that eternally flows underneath temporary appearances.45

As Nietzsche says, the Dionysian rapture appears “under the influence of the narcotic potion hymned by all primitive men. Man is no longer an artist, he has become a work of art: the artistic power of all nature . . . is made manifest in this delirium”.46 Therefore, within both of Nietzsche’s gods, there is the recognition of every positive manifestation of human life, accompanied by the acknowledgment of a formlessness, a chaos and a darkness, and these two forces operate in unison, producing, prior to the advent of Socratic thought, art and tragedy. De Chirico recognized these aesthetic concepts, for he understood the problematic nature of figurative representation and the inevitable idealization that resulted. Nietzsche described the characteristics of true Apollo-Dionysos coupling as only completely realized in Attic tragedy.

To the two gods of art, Apollo and Dionysos, we owe our recognition that in the Greek world there is a tremendous opposition, as regards both origins and aims, between the Apolline art of the Sculptor and the non-visual, Dionysiac art of music. These two very different tendencies walk side by side, usually in violent opposition to one another, inciting one another to ever more powerful births, perpetuating the struggle of the opposition only apparently bridged by the word art.47

So in general terms, the nature of Apollo suggests individuation, whereas Dionysos indicates the world of ecstasy and intoxication. Nietzsche argues that “understanding kills action. True understanding, insight into the terrible truth, outweighs every motive for action.”48

The philosopher John Sallis deepens our understanding of the perceptual dislocation inherent in these Apollonian-Dionysian ideas. It is worth quoting his description in full, to grasp the depth of this interdependence and as a way to extend our understanding of de Chirico’s visual allusions to it.

But excess, Dionysian ekstasis, is not simply a truth, not even a fundamental truth, not even the fundamental truth. One could, of

45 Nietzsche, Tragedy, p. 16.
46 ibid., p. 17.
47 ibid., p. 14.
48 Nietzsche, Tragedy, op. cit., p. 39.
course, undertake to stabilize the result of the revelation, asserting, for instance, that Dionysian excess underlies all things as their ground, as the origin from which they arise in their determinateness. But one could put forth such a formulation only by ignoring the way in which that would-be ground disrupts the very ordering that belongs to the concept of ground and dissolves the very determinateness that it would, as ground, produce. What the Dionysian revelation reveals is not a ground of determination but the dissolution of ground and of determination. What it reveals is not ground but rather - and I use the word very cautiously - abyss. Apollonian truth, the figure of Apollo in which the limits of individuation are drawn, the Olympian images in which one is reflected back to oneself, such truth can cover over the abysmal Dionysian truth but can never cease being threatened by it.\(^{49}\)

For Sallis, the abyss lies at the heart of Dionysian and Apollonian themes and we can use it to help illuminate the often cited sense of foreboding and threat in de Chirico’s work. It is, therefore, possible to see de Chirico’s silent, shadowed settings as demonstrating the incipient abyss underlying the apparent stillness and stability they portray. Sallis’s view also demonstrates how Apollonian truth-illusion can be the consolation of such indeterminateness. So it is possible to regard the Nietzschean principle of the dream-image as both the doorway to the abyss and the assertion of Apollonian individuation.

Despite the indecipherable quality in de Chirico’s visuals these creative concepts offer a way of understanding the often cited enigmas that characterize the artist’s work. These aesthetic methods show the possibility of images that offer renewable relationships while providing an eternal openness of interpretation. These “differing, even contradictory, facets” of de Chirico’s work can be seen in Nietzschean terms, as art becomes equal to knowing, and, as is suggested by an idealist metaphysics, life becomes unknowable in terms of ultimate truth. In Wieland Schmied’s terms, difference in de Chirico’s images can be the artist’s ability to “quote many different qualities in praise save one: continuity”\(^{50}\). This perspective gives meaning to the core of the artist’s philosophical motives and imagery. For this supposed aesthetic inconsistency can be seen within a Nietzschean perspective. The lack of visual consistency can in fact be seen as an indication of de Chirico’s true quest. The paintings are informed by a sense of philosophical purpose and when viewed in total, owe their enigmatic content and shadowy mood to a deeply felt poetic vision, a quest also evident

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in his related writing such as *Hebdomeros*, his *Memoirs*, and numerous essays (published in the post-war Italian art magazine *Valori Plastici*).

De Chirico's enigmatic imagery is considered in the following chapters, showing the relationship to Nietzschean ideas. Also, the symbolic content of the images is discussed in terms of how these ideas are applied. I address the questions of where and how de Chirico's imagery and Nietzsche's creative unity intersect and what the specifics of de Chirico's enigma are and whether it supports a Nietzschean framework. Various commentators, most notably James Thrall Soby and William Rubin have also considered Nietzsche's influence on the artist, and these connections show de Chirico's bond with Nietzsche, in relation to their treatment of this quality, also the quality of the unknown, as in my own work, specifically my *Dioscuri (Lady with a Horse)* and *The Unity*. It is a quality at the heart of his, and my, visual incongruence and inevitably suggests the tragic nature of art. In Daniel Chapelle's terms, "rather than devaluing impermanence and whatever is impermanent, tragedy or tragic philosophizing serves as affirmation." 51 De Chirico's images offer an opportunity to embark on a quest for the unknown, the eternal, without the constraints of logic. De Chirico said that painting should be a vehicle for

something new, something that I did not know before . . . One must never forget that painting must be the reflection of a deep sensation, and deep means strange, and strange means hardly known, or altogether unknown. 52

This "unknown" can be linked to a Nietzschean perspective and its direct relationship to tragedy. De Chirico's paintings embody the essential contradictions of Nietzschean tragedy. The tragic figure portrayed, be it Ariadne or Ulysses, represent the Nietzschean themes of endless voyaging and the dream-sleep of Apollonian art. This interpretation takes us some way to recognizing the mood of loss and foreboding so often commented on in de Chirico's imagery. 53

Accepting de Chirico's theme of an unknown or a deeper sensation in painting, it is therefore reasonable to assume that the various elements in his paintings are a means to evoke this. The historian, Emily Braun, acknowledges that de Chirico's visual ideas are dependent on philosophical principles and considers him to have "domesticated the nihilistic mood of *Pittura Metafisica*" and, by doing so, "bequeathed

52 G. de Chirico in Rainbow-Vigourit, op. cit., p. 104.
53 Paolo Baldacci, p. 29.
De Chirico's prominent use of Ariadne exemplifies this view of tragedy and hope and, in Rainbow-Vigourt's words, she is a

locus for rebirth and transformation . . . It seems that Ariadne, or her various substitutes, (statues, etc.) . . . can be seen as hope for, and link to, the Real, so that the use of the double negative and the facing of the void does not ultimately leave us in the cold.55

Similarly, in my own work, the facing of the void in Dioscuri and The Unity is rarely a purely nihilistic emptiness but rather an apprehension of the real.

The discussion of the real in both de Chirico and Nietzsche demonstrates their underlying concern with early Greek philosophy while also indicating their common ground.56 Nietzsche recognized the cultural duality within the Hellenic world where on one hand there were savage, barbarous rituals and on the other the redirecting of these destructive impulses for the creation of their art and culture. In this, Nietzsche's opinion differed from other previous analyses of the Greeks, which imagined them as an idealized, harmonious culture.

Nietzsche saw a parallel in pre-Platonic philosophy and his own age, dominated by meaninglessness and a lack of values, inevitably resulting in nihilism. "To say that the universe is without meaning is to say that it lacks an intelligible reality and exploring this reality was at the heart of antique Greek philosophy."57 Therefore "What is real?" became Nietzsche's basic question, the problem to which all his labours can be referred.58 Nietzsche's exploration of pre-Platonic philosophy provided a way of discussing the problems of reality and meaning.59 In following the philosopher's ideas about form in art, de Chirico found a new way of representing figures and reality. Central to my own artistic philosophy and production, as well as to de Chirico, is

56. "Nietzsche does not refer to the 'pre-Socratic' philosophers, but to the 'pre-Platonic'. In Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks, he speaks of 'the republic of geniuses from Thales to Socrates' (section 2) and one misunderstands his admiration for the 'pre-Socratics' unless one realizes that he regarded Socrates himself as the last of them." Hollingdale, Nietzsche, op. cit., p. 77.
57. "If we look at Greek philosophy as a whole, we shall see that it is dominated from beginning to end by the problem of reality. In the last resort the question is always 'What is real'?" Thales asked it no less than Plato and Aristotle; and, no matter what the answer given may be, where that question is asked, there we have philosophy." John Burnet, "Thales to Plato", Greek Philosophy, London, Macmillan, p. 9.
58. Hollingdale, Nietzsche, op. cit., p. 78.
59. Ibid.
Nietzsche’s view of art as ultimately life affirming, a “deification of existence.”\textsuperscript{60} Through the medium of art de Chirico could apply Nietzsche’s skepticism concerning perceptual unity. De Chirico could attempt to fulfill Nietzsche’s goal for an artist, which was to be able to “represent terrible and questionable things (without fear)”.\textsuperscript{61} De Chirico’s integration of Nietzsche’s aesthetic principles dealt with the modernist problems inherent in figuration and traditional Christian imagery.

De Chirico saw that the representations of both the figure and conventional picture space could be reinterpreted, reflecting the dilemmas within modernist culture, including the associated tragedy of modern life. The artist wanted to create in his paintings profound ideas that were able to reflect “something new” while offering a consoling vision in the face of the real. He pursued this idea by considering the “exceptional poetry” he had discovered “in the books of Nietzsche” as well as by using the “lyrical quality of Greek prehistory”.\textsuperscript{62}

Given that de Chirico was considering a method of representing his poetic interpretation of Nietzsche, Greek philosophy and apparent reality, he still had to resolve the difficulties of how to achieve this visually. He was not concerned with finding a new way to present visible perception, as the Cubists or Impressionists had been, in the form of surface manipulation or interpretations of light. In fact de Chirico felt that “the greatest damage that impressionism has done to the plastic arts is to have misled pictorial feeling.”\textsuperscript{63} De Chirico’s goal was not to establish new ground in the formal discipline of painting but rather in what could be considered the subject matter of modern painting. Rejecting the option of manipulating composition or surface treatments, he therefore sought a sensation unrepresented by the pictorial repertoire of modernist figurative painting. This engaged his philosophical concern with the problems of the real and enabled his paintings to reflect the skepticism that accompanies secular art. Despite Nietzsche’s ultimately positive position, Paolo Baldacci viewed this approach as fundamentally nihilist.

This did not entail paintings without recognizable objects and forms so much as ones whose true subject would be nothing - the representation of non-sense. This nihilistic conviction, gleaned from a close reading of Nietzsche and Arthur Schopenhauer, led de Chirico towards a rigorous explanation of the universal order of

\textsuperscript{61} ibid.
\textsuperscript{63} G. de Chirico in Valori Plastici, Rome, June-October, 1919, quoted in M. Carrá, \textit{Metaphysical Art}, op. cit., p. 93.
the real, from which he launched a radical attack on the concept of reality as visible phenomena.  

However, while this interpretation goes some way to explaining the enigma of de Chirico’s images, it limits the interpretation of his oeuvre. It reduces the appreciation of the aesthetic mechanisms of the paintings to simply a representation of emptiness and the void. Yet an awareness of the artist’s concerns gives a perspective to how he wanted to activate a sense of the abyss. On the surface the paintings function as a questioning of reality, as well as a way for imagery and philosophy to mesh. The enigmatic mood and sense of foreboding make the images not only memorably but provide an understanding of how they have endured well beyond their time without appearing to lose impact. De Chirico’s emphasis on reality and the “unknown” produced the enigmatic, revelatory images he is recognized for. According to Rainbow-Vigour, de Chirico’s aesthetic emerges at

that instant when beauty is felt as ephemeral and when the definite is felt as enigmatic. This is the moment when what is taken for granted proves to be susceptible to miraculous transformations when one movement reverts into its opposite, the known into the unknown and vice-versa.  

In the development of Metaphysical Painting, de Chirico’s short-lived involvement with the Surrealists widened the debate on the content of his paintings and their possible meaning, adding to the confusing interpretation of sources and influences. Such confusion developed through the Surrealists interest in psychoanalytic ideas about dreams and the unconscious, which superficially provided a simple way of interpreting de Chirico’s enigma. For example, Freud’s essay on aesthetics, Das Unheimlich superficially appears to provide a key to de Chirico’s work but this notion is not supported by de Chirico, or his work.

De Chirico’s manipulation of these visual elements gives an appearance of the illusion associated with enigma. Certainly the meshing of these above qualities with a philosophical perspective makes the paintings difficult to understand and it is therefore difficult to see de Chirico’s oeuvre as a unified vision. De Chirico’s marriage of visually incongruent elements creates a sense of disquiet about reality, yet this quality

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64 Paolo Baldacci, *De Chirico and Savina*, op. cit., p. 62.
links his images to philosophy has caused the confusion about the content of his work. De Chirico’s images create a response that oscillates between the known and the unknown, in both aesthetic and narrative terms. This artistic method stimulates the most allusive of philosophical discussions and one deeply associated with Nietzsche: the nature of the real. Defining, or at least exploring 'the nature of the real' is my own aesthetic quest and it is in the study of de Chirico and Nietzsche that I have discovered the means to do so.

While there are various interpretations of de Chirico’s work and career, the next chapter shows the connections between the philosophical and artistic ideas in each. In the subsequent chapters I have used his imagery to show how the artist consistently pursued Nietzschean themes throughout his career.
3

Ariadne’s Thread - Statues and Shadows

We have left the land and taken to our ship! We have burned our bridges - more, we have burned our land behind us! Now, little ship, take care! The ocean lies all around you; true, it is not always roaring, and sometimes it lies there as if it were silken and golden and a gentle favourable dream. But there will be times when you will know that it is infinite and that there is nothing more terrible than infinity... Alas, if homesickness for land should assail you, as if there were more freedom there - and there is no longer any "land".


I selected de Chirico’s Ariadne series of paintings to discuss because I also identified with a recurrent female symbol in my own imagery. Although my concerns were not referential to a specific, classical statue/myth. I preferred instead to use the representation of the head as symbolic of specific, interconnecting themes. My own were ideas of memory and loss and I saw parallels in the content of the Ariadne myth and my own work.

It has been pointed out to me by a viewer of my work that the question of the gender of my figures is problematic and that they suggested a discordant relationship with a “male gaze”. While not discounting the inevitability of feminist readings taking this line, I can only insist on their Nietzschan context. Given that Nietzsche’s perspectivism emerges from a view that the world, as understood by the fixture of god the father, is a fable and Nietzsche’s alternative is presenting the world through ‘the abyss’, any reading of my work through a Freudian/partriachial/phallic lens is alien to my philosophical and aesthetic interests. Debra Bergoffen notes that Nietzsche disputes the very idea of the phallus:

“Rather than pursue the Lacanian route of allowing the phallus to recirculate as the impossible object of our desire, Nietzsche queers the phallus, and abandons the Oedipal idea that we need the lure of a complete object to sustain our desire. Stepping outside the Oedipal regime, Nietzsche calls on us to orient our desire around the abyss, the hole between the drive and its object, and to embrace the innocence of becoming. He calls us to affirm the drive rather than the object and teaches us to value the gap that sustains the drives production of objects. Calling the world a fable
and calling women truth and life, Nietzsche seems to ask us to live our desire as innocent rather than as impossible and seems to toss the phallic crutch aside."

The Ariadne myth comes from classic times, and de Chirico and I, in our use of Ariadne as a source, do so in a Nietzschean manner which is an unphallic return to the Greeks. Page du Bois argues persuasively that the Greeks understanding of the Oedipus Tragedy was not Freudian, but instead concerns the mother’s autonomy and the troubled relations between male and female and fears associated with being estranged from the earth. The Greeks were not concerned with the castrating desires of men. Neither am I.

If one looks at “The Poem” it is irrelevant whether the figure is male or female. The figure is in a state of reflection is perhaps at a point of performance of a poem give the sense of a stage presence. Or perhaps she is the poem. The artifact itself. Implied also is that the figure, sitting as she is on what might be a travelling trunk, is on a point of departure of becoming, of moving on. The figure is not open to any judgement outside the world. This figure is not to be measured up against what should be. The reality of the figure exists within the frame? And exists within the experience of herself as performer? “The Poem” itself or a movement towards possible departure. The eyes of the figure look out towards the experience of her own authenticity! They require no communication of the eyes of another who may choose to categorize or to judge her; her meaning is finally enigmatic. The presence of the figure is paramount? Her environment is secondary; this statue type figure is the presence. The figure does not necessarily bring meaning to the props; she is detached like de Chirico’s paintings. Objects in space are illogical; they exist in an illogical space. The curtains might be theatrical or might be curtains in a hospital ward. The essence is enigmatic. Like de Chirico’s Ariadne, my figures embody ‘calmness’, ‘tranquility’ but they are displaced, perhaps ‘lost’, perhaps about to grieve, or move beyond grieving.

The Ariadne series of paintings typifies the works de Chirico set in Italian piazzas. As a group, they are characterized by mysterious-looking and largely unpopulated settings which gives them a sense of empty calmness. Ariadne is often situated in a way that creates evocative juxtapositions with otherwise banal items which when seen together seem to transcend their simple meaning.

De Chirico’s source for Ariadne in the series is a Roman copy of the lost Hellenistic sculpture of Ariadne, asleep on the island of Naxos. Several of these Roman

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copies exist in Italy and de Chirico could have seen one either in Florence or the Vatican. The historian Nancy Scott claims that de Chirico's use of the statue was made possible by his proximity to a copy at Versailles in Paris, likely to be the 18th century one by Cornelius Van Cleve (fig. 3). De Chirico revisited the Ariadne statue motif throughout his career, using it in different ways, in composition after composition. This persistent recurrence is a key to de Chirico's use of a symbol and the way he blurs history, myth and the normal passage of time. Ariadne's recurrent presence can be seen as a lasting personal symbol for de Chirico, one connected to the history of tragedy and loss. For the myth suggests both Nietzsche's cyclical tragedy and Apollonian form-giving themes.

Let us first look generally at the myth of Ariadne before we examine the artist's use of her. Ariadne was the daughter of King Minos. When the Athenian, Theseus sailed into Crete, Ariadne assisted him in killing her half-brother, the Minotaur, but only if she were permitted to return to Athens with him as his wife. Ariadne provided the magic ball of thread that guided him into and out of the inner recess of the Minotaur's labyrinth. After successfully killing the Minotaur, Theseus and Ariadne sailed from Crete, stopping later at the island of Naxos. He abandoned her on the island as she lay sleeping. On waking, Ariadne wept and lamented. The god Dionysos was moved by her suffering, came down to earth and married her.

De Chirico's portraits of Ariadne are always of her at the moment of abandonment, sleeping, a moment before transformation. In my own work I have consciously selected figures that are stilled at a decisive moment. Works such as The Mysterious Union, The Dream, the Sanatorium and The Unity all evoke a consciousness of the moment. I wanted these works to suggest the ambiguity of the moment, where there is a sense of everything hanging in the balance. My own representation of the disunity of Apollonian/Dionysian space.

Focussing on 'moments' is an influence I have accepted into my work from both de Chirico and Nietzsche. It is a position that in a Nietzschean sense is the opposite of goal orientation or teleology. The 'moment' captured in my art is not deterministic; it has an inner necessity as opposed to being compelled by some external force. In abandoning the 'fables' of, for example, Christian redemption, I follow the Nietzschean line expressed well by Zarathustra in Thus Spake Zarathustra when he

69 See Figure O, Soby, G. de Chirio, op. cit., pp. 52-56.
70 For a full account of this myth see Appendix A.
addresses the heaven as the abyss of light: “To throw myself into your heights – that is my depth! To shelter myself in your purity – that is my innocence!”\(^{71}\)

In looking at, for example, The Unity, one must think only within this moment of ‘becoming’. The figure is there in its absence; it reaches to the light of the heavens ironically represented here as dark, (the abyss) as de Chirico does, in his paintings of moments that contain the two aspects, the Apollonian and the Dionysian in disjunction. The figure is set in an open landscape but it is also dressed the ‘role’, the ‘appearance’ of a marionette doll, a ‘being’, yet an imitation of a being. The figure has dancing shoes; it is ‘stilled’ but the promise of the dance is there. The moment contains the promise of the dance as much as the stillness that proceeds it. The painting expresses the process of becoming. As Nietzsche writes, “The meaning of becoming must be fulfilled, attained, completed in every moment”.\(^{72}\)

Is this figure on the brink of taking wings as he dances? Each of his gestures betokens enchantment; through him sounds a supernatural power, the same poser which makes the animals speak, and the earth render up milk and honey . . . No longer the artist, he has become a work of art.\(^{73}\)

Characteristically de Chirico used statues and mannequins rather than human figures and this resulted in the well-recognized figurative ambiguity of his image. As Rainbow-Vigourt has observed, it is “difficult to know what is actually alive and human and what is not.”\(^{74}\) This illusion is achieved by replacing straightforward figuration with evocative forms, so that the eye enters into a shadowy realm of gloves, architecture spaces, steaming trains and inanimate figurative forms. These other-worldly forms read as figurative presence, so de Chirico’s typically expressive use of statues produces the persuasive enigmatic ambiance. While the viewer perceives a figurative presence, he recognizes only a stone statue, one that is emotionally suggestive. The statues project an identity which challenges the truth of our perception; one central to the artist’s purpose. For the haunting mood of de Chirico’s statue-

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\(^{71}\) Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra, Before Sunrise*, op. cit., p. 103.


\(^{73}\) *Birth of Tragedy*, pp. 23-24.

images creates an overriding sense of the temporary presence of man and his shadow.

Throughout my imagery I have either alluded to the figurative presence or used a generalized face/head. My intention has been also to suggest an enigmatic figurative presence, which questions perceptions of knowing or truth. I consciously tried to make these figures enter into a dialogue, to seem to be creatures at the point of becoming. See for example Homage, where the figure is statue-like in a state of deep thought. Again I employ the curtain that perhaps suggests a hospital ward more than a stage though, I add, a ‘role’ in either involves a point of performance, a sense of entering a role, a point of departure into further becoming. The curtains are pristine white, whereas the base of the painting is dark and concise. Whether the figure is being deeply reflective or in psychological despair is not the point so much as is the depiction of deep consciousness that will create beyond itself, an idea, contained within the moment of dialogue with ‘truth’, ‘despair’, ‘meaning’. Will this consciousness destroy ‘meaning’? Will her insight be a Dionysian one learnt from the wise silence, companion of Dionysos, “Ephemeral wretch, begotten by accident and toil, why do you force me to tell you what it would be your greatest boon not to hear? What would be best for you is quite beyond your reach: not to have been born, not to be, to be nothing. But the second best is to die soon.”

De Chirico consistently evokes death as well as absence by his use of statues. The viewer accepts that Ariadne is sleeping, while acknowledging that a statue cannot sleep. The contradiction of appearance and reality invokes Nietzsche’s themes on the qualities of illusion and indeterminacy. Ariadne’s presence suggests the duality of creative ideas and in the words of the Nietzschean scholar Lawrence Hatab she projects a “temporary permanence”. In autobiographical terms Ariadne is also a symbol of persistent dreaming for she represents “the years when de Chirico lived in Paris and dreamed of Italy”.

In the novel Hebdomerons de Chirico compares islands to chambers and it is possible to see the piazza setting as an island. We can see in the various works such as The Soothsayer’s Recompense or the later work Piazza’Italia that Ariadne is usually

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76 Nietzsche, Birth of Tragedy, p. 29.
77 N. Scott, The Mystery and Melancholy, op. cit., p. 49.
78 Rainbow-Vigourt, Giorgio de Chirico, op. cit., p. 299.
on a stone pedestal, seeming to float in the centre of the piazza. She is never connected to any part of the surrounding land, always sleeping and never fully in the light or dark. These works have a strongly felt public setting, yet they seem insular and isolated. This contrast produces a many-layered enigma, yet the contrast is indicative of the artist’s creative themes.

Through the Ariadne motif, de Chirico presents us with a painted approximation of a neoclassical replica of a Hellenistic sculpture, depicting a woman who probably never existed. Reality is constantly being deferred in this representation of a representation of a fictitious person. I follow this line in my head paintings. The figures in all my head shots are essentially fictitious. The point is that ‘portraiture’ does not contain a ‘reality’ of a known person; it can only ever be an ‘appearance’ taken artificially out of time. My figures therefore are deliberately construed as existing in a timeless space not to be understood by some fanciful historical contextualization.

As the statue may initially appear to be a random choice, it is valuable to investigate de Chirico’s use of Ariadne, we can see in the reproductions of the statue of Ariadne (fig. 2 and 3) that there is more than one possibility in the interpretation and choice. It is apparent that the van Cleve copy at Fontainebleau has an exaggerated, recumbent quality not obvious in the Roman copy in the Vatican. In both the *Meditation of the Infinite* and *The Soothsayer’s Recompense* we can see a more prostrate and mutable form, one that seems more reminiscent of the van Cleve version than the Roman copy. While in the *Piazza d’Italia* the definition and detail are more suggestive of the Vatican’s copy.

Although de Chirico never spoke of the source for these works we do know that he spent some time walking at Fontainebleau and his comments at this time can be considered in the light of the Ariadne statue.79

One bright winter morning I found myself in the courtyard of the palace of Versailles. Everything looked at me with a strange and questioning glance. I saw then that every angle of the palace, every column, every window had a soul that was an enigma. I looked about me at the stone heroes, motionless under the bright sky, under the cold rays of the winter sun shining without love like a profound song. A bird sang in a cage hanging at a window.

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Then I experienced all the mystery that drives men to create certain things.\(^{80}\)

The anthropomorphizing of statues enables de Chirico to present a symbolic icon, an icon that is both aesthetic as well as individualized.\(^{81}\) So as well as being an Apollonian symbol, the statue becomes a representation of Dionysian primal oneness, for we recognize the statue's non-human other worldliness. This illusion is made more compelling by Ariadne’s dream-sleep of release and intoxication which overlays her Dionysian destiny.

The Ariadne series exemplifies de Chirico’s challenge to traditional figuration; the figure is transformed into a statue, significantly a sleeping statue. The decision to represent her as sleeping has direct links to Nietzsche, for, we will see, the Apollonian is activated by illusion as a means to assuage the Dionysian. The Ariadne images illuminate tragedy yet retain the essential illusionary form, remaining the dream-illusion of Apollonian art.\(^{82}\)

In the paintings of mine that draw on this essential duality, like *The Dioscuri* or *The Dream*, I have used the suggestion of sleep or partial waking as an indication of this Dionysian/Apollonian disunity. My figures are not just participating in the Apollonian dream state, but also in the loss of the oneness of Dionysian tragedy. The figure looks as if she is lying on a hard surface; the perspective created suggests two ways of looking. In one perspective one looks down from above yet the placement of the poles implies a direct encounter. It is as if ‘the camera’ has a double duty. The poles might suggest a cage, an imprisonment and yet she rests in a state of tranquility. Does she rest against the horse or is the home placed there as de Chirico places things illogically and discordantly? Her mind might be with the horse but her body is woven into the fabric of the curtain and the bed. The dichotomy of soul and body is apparent. The legs are tightly bound, yet the mind is ‘stilled’ at a point of departure perhaps with the horse. Why is the curtain twisted around the pole in the foreground, and why is the background curtain pulled to the side in line with her body, is there another presence? The bed and curtains have a solidity not evident in my other curtains. Like de Chirico’s use of the Ariadne myth perhaps I was, in composing this figure, influenced by his use of statues as figures.

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\(^{81}\) ibid., p. 55.

\(^{82}\) Nietzsche, *Tragedy*, op. cit., pp. 48-52.
Tragedy according to Nietzsche can only be enacted when there is unity between the Dionysian and Apollonian aesthetic forces. The painting enacts, I suspect, the schism that separated them. "Consciousness destroys the primal oneness of the universe" Nietzsche argues in his discussion on how Socratic thought splintered the original unity in art. This is an unsettling painting for me that embodies Nietzschean and de Chirico influences. Nevertheless there is another story of my own woven there that will remain within its enigma.

The viewer need not be aware of Ariadne's identity and background to respond to her symbolism, but the image of the sleeping figure awakens a dreamy mood which heightens her emotional significance. Ariadne is a reclining statue, yet she is what Nietzsche called "our ultimate reason for gratitude toward art", she symbolizes the nature of art as the "kind of cult of the untrue". So by presenting her dream state, her soothsaying reverie, de Chirico shows both her dream life as well as emphasizing the Apollonian-Dionysian themes.

The American scholar Marianne Martin thinks the series of Ariadne has "extremely unsculptural images... for instance The Soothsayer's Recompense", notable for their "four or five-fold removal from the phenomenal human presence". This visual characteristic endures throughout de Chirico's use of Ariadne. These mythological spectres are a way for de Chirico to explore the problems of representation and reality.

*The Soothsayer's Recompense* and the *Meditation of the Infinite* (fig. 4), both have evocative and significant titles, ones that summon up associations with the gods, their oracles and temples. *The innocents* were not in any way to be portraits in the sense of imitating an actual person. My view is that a representation of a person is never really able to equal a 'truth'. The title *The innocents* refers to a "state of becoming" and was selected to highlight a philosophical state, one dependent on Nietzsche's aesthetic and cultural framework.

I was inspired by Nietzsche's description of a state of knowing. My works titled *The innocents* could only arise and develop when I abandoned the idea of an external truth, such as a portrait or likeness. By doing this the images could embody the concept of the horror underlying the illusion of beauty. Nietzsche frequently speaks of

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the worthlessness of logic and reason because of how valueless it is in revealing truth, significantly in relation to appearance. This series of works titled *The innocents* accepts that the representation of an illusion is the only consolation for the underlying abyss at the core of life/art.

Their possible state of moving from their stillness is implied. The power of Apollo is to cast a veil over the terrible Dionysian insight that it is better “not to be born”. Nietzsche’s argument in *The Birth of Tragedy* is that rather than religion offering the ultimate consolation for our mortality, that only art can. Apollonian illusion will cast ‘magic’ over the terrible truth and give to man in art an image of his dignity and his possibility within this world – the only real world. Nietzsche in allocating a role for Apollo in this aesthetic process compares him with Schopenhauer’s conception of man: “Even as on an immense, raging sea, assailed by huge wave crests, a man sits in a little row boat trusting his frail craft, so, amidst the furious torments of this world, the individual sits tranquilly, supported by the principium individuationis and relying on it.”85 The figures in my innocent paintings embody this state of tranquility – their look, gesture are meant to radiate the full delight, wisdom, and beauty of ‘illusion’ – however not completely. My paintings embody, like Nietzsche’s thesis, the final disunity between Apollonian and Dionysian aesthetic forces. The Dionysian insight is not distilled in the illusion. The innocents ready as they are to embark beyond their tranquility to further becoming take with them the torment, the loss, the freak and the knowledge of schism.

In De Chirico’s *The Soothsayer’s Recompense*, Ariadne lies stretched out on her base, on one side of the composition, in shadow and asleep. The light streams in from the other side and we distantly glimpse a steaming train framed by an arch with a date palm. Perhaps there is a wry pun aimed at Nietzsche in the motif. The theme of Ariadne ends with her being rescued from Naxos by Dionysos, who became her lover. Yet she is represented here in the form of a statue, an art form which Nietzsche identified with Apollo. Indeed, in *The Soothsayer’s Recompense* she appears in conjunction with date palms, a symbol for Apollo. Given this, we are reminded that Nietzsche referred to Apollo as “the soothsaying god”. Ariadne, the lover of Dionysos, is shifted towards her polar opposite, Apollo, even possibly becoming a recompense for her losses.

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85 Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, op. cit., p. 16.
De Chirico’s aesthetic views of the arc also connect to the Apollonian theme, for although he considers the arc ‘beautiful’ it is so by its lack of completion. “In the arc there is still an element of incompleteness that needs to be and is capable of being fulfilled - it can still be anticipated (this thought clarified for me the eminently metaphysical impression that porticoes and arched openings in general have always made upon me.)”

We see throughout these works the consistent use of the arc, be it as a portico, walkway or solitary symbol, for de Chirico used this motif as one of the foundations of his metaphysical aesthetic.

*The Soothsayers’ Recompense* uses a compositional contrast by the almost equal polarizing of the elements dark and light, movement and stillness, symbol within object all show a contrasting unity, one that supports a Nietzschean perspective. De Chirico contrasts various symbols by dividing space into almost conceptual blocks, and he persistently employs this formal device. The Apollonian-Dionysian symbols operate in an almost combative manner, the date palm on the daylit right-hand side of the image and sleeping Ariadne on the other left-hand side, drowned in evening-like shadows and darkness. The arc stands almost confrontationally opposite the sleeping figure. Rainbow-Vigourt comments on the polarized dependence of de Chirico’s objects:

*In Turin in Spring 1914* and *The Uncertainty of the Poet 1913*... one finds huge artichokes, bananas, and pineapples. Their incongruity within the setting stresses the bareness, helplessness, and sterility of the general atmosphere. The lusciousness of the inanimate brings forth deadness of the animate. (In other writings, de Chirico associates bananas with happiness and voluptuousness.)

The force of the Soothsayer composition depends on the relationship of opposites, the interplay between light and dark spaces, between the incompleteness of the archways and the stillness of the statues. All contribute to the symbolic force of the painting and Ariadne’s sleep triggers the interaction.

De Chirico uses Ariadne and statues generally as a means of challenging reality and appearance. He claimed that the evolution of the mannequins, “had come to him in a gothic cathedral.” So not only in his titles but also in his descriptive allusions does de Chirico link these other world figures to the soothsaying temple.

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Historically and visually the sleeping Ariadne is inevitably linked to the Minotaur, where she poses an intimacy not only with the labyrinth and its inventor, but with her half-brother (the Minotaur who devoured innocent youth every seven years). The association with the Minotaur and the labyrinth is one of darkness and Dionysian abyss, dominated by indetermination and primordial nature. Ariadne's recumbent immobility lies almost in opposition to the Dionysian abyss, her stillness seems to arch over this abyss. This quality of almost hermetic containment in de Chirico's paintings has been a mechanism that elicits an opposite or associated sensation.

The historian Stephen Kern points out the way de Chirico has used clocks in his paintings as an emblem of the immutable. They show how a motif can be positioned within modernist image making to evoke the collision between antiquity and elements of modernity.

De Chirico included prominent clocks looming . . . in a number of paintings: *The Delights of the Poet* 1913, *The Soothsayer's Recompense* 1913, *The Philosopher's Conquest* 1914, *Gare Montparnasse* and *The Melancholy of Departure* 1914. In all but the first of these a railroad train chugs by, which suggests that he may have deliberately connected the railroads and the standard time that began to be imposed on a global scale precisely in 1912. Although the titles of the paintings suggest transcendence in space and time, the clocks fix the action in a single and immutable moment. There is a rigid, static quality to them that no train journey or soothsayer's vision could undo.\(^89\)

In *The Soothsayer's Recompense* we can see the clock above the sequence of arcs behind Ariadne and while the character of the time being represented is not clear, the symbol of the clock seems to draw our attention to the persistence of Ariadne's enigmatic sleep. The Parisian art dealer Paul Guillaume owned a de Chirico painting composed around a clock image and his comments emphasize the symbolic and suggestive nature of de Chirico's paintings. "Try understanding me, every day after lunch, I sit down before the painting, and when it strikes two, why then I have, in some way a wonderful moment."\(^90\)

Emily Braun has commented on de Chirico's manipulation of time, his "breaks in continuity and sense of suspended time" that "reveal the irremediable gap between the present and the past, while knowledge of the future is denied".\(^91\) These responses


\(^90\) Paul Guillaume in del Conde, *Giorgio de Chirico*, op. cit., p. 76.

\(^91\) Braun, *Poetic Irony*, op. cit., p. 347.
indicate the nature and quality of de Chirico’s visual devices, but it is also important to view his breaks in continuity as yet another device in creating enigma.

The juxtaposition of symbols draws the viewer into a consideration of the fatality of time. The disparate symbols succeed in part because the objects contrast in such a way as to symbolize the temporal identity of each, stressing their internal, poetic significance. This idea shows how objects can suggest absence as much as presence.\textsuperscript{92} De Chirico’s selection of objects and buildings are telling symbols whose function and durability transcends their time frame. He achieves this not so much by the direct relationship between the objects, as by selection and contrast. De Chirico persistently shows how he can link one object to a seemingly unrelated one, emphasizing the Nietzschean idea of “the suffering of internal contradictions.”\textsuperscript{93}

Soby noted the contrasting sensory response when seeing various motifs; for him the trains in de Chirico’s paintings provoke an “almost physical longing for the reassurance of the sound.”\textsuperscript{94} We often can see in the Ariadne works that amidst the stillness there is a steaming train, billowing through the background. In these numerous poetic allusions we can recognize Nietzsche’s allusion and so these tragic, elegiac images silently projecting the message, “understanding inhibits action, action requires the veil of illusion.”\textsuperscript{95} This section of The Birth of Tragedy uses Hamlet as a model of tragedy and argues that truly seeing the essence of things eliminates any motive for action. This idea can be recognized in de Chirico’s visual world, for the most dominant and persistently noted characteristic is the total lack of action.

These still or static qualities have often been noted by commentators. Historians like Patrick Waldberg have highlighted the inherent contradictions within the inaction. “Finally, the profoundly static nature of the composition, contradicted by the violent slant given to the plane surface, seems to me to express, without too much emphasis, a dialectic of tranquillity and dizzy panic, of time and its passing.”\textsuperscript{96}

There are philosophical implications in Ariadne sleeping. It is not only a sleep of dreams, but also a sleep that manifests a sense of becoming. This idea encompasses a fundamental theme within Nietzsche, for a core element was his recognition of secular

\textsuperscript{92} Rainbow-Vigour, Giorgio de Chirico, op. cit., p. 102.
\textsuperscript{93} Nietzsche, Tragedy, op. cit., p. 8.
\textsuperscript{95} Nietzsche, Tragedy, op. cit, p. 39.
man's changing relationship to truth and the accompanying skepticism. So for Nietzsche, "modern man is acquiring the idea of 'becoming' as his ruling idea: and if everything evolves, then truth, too, evolves." The recurrence of Ariadne for de Chirico is also an evolution of the symbolic truth about her representation. Her symbolic force holds continual power over de Chirico and he tests this hold in his visual revisitations.

There is another feeling at the sight of Ariadne, one of melancholy that the artist claimed was his dominant mood in his early creative years. This idea is strengthened by the title of the 1912 painting of Ariadne, Melancholy (with the word Melancolia carved on the base). The idea that melancholy was a persistent emotion for de Chirico or one he explored seems certain. In his early years the artist referred to his own bouts of melancholy on a number of occasions, writing, for instance, "I read books of philosophy and was overcome with severe crises of black melancholy." And these feelings echo throughout his work and are particularly resonant in the Ariadne series. We always see her isolated, abandoned and semi-conscious. For Rainbow-Vigour, "melancholy was de Chirico's bias, his starting point."

The metaphysical aspect of de Chirico's images is influenced by classical aesthetics and shows the effect of Greek architecture, as he thought the Greeks were guided by a "philosophical aesthetic". De Chirico also saw the theatricality of Greek architecture, how it was able to produce a receptivity to a dialectic, one that delivered "Homer, Aeschylus" and "the tragedy of serenity." This quality of tragedy residing in serenity is one of the notable characteristics of de Chirico's œuvre. James Soby states that his paintings are "almost devoid of any movement at all, and the mechanical aspects of civilization are limited to hopelessly antiquated locomotives, slow-moving clocks and an occasional abandoned factory chimney". Often the only movement is shown above the image, the picture space is a "frozen void where the only motion is often that of pennons fluttering in some current of air high above the empty squares below." Soby's description gives form to the eerie sense of an abyss underlying all de Chirico's imagery.

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100 Joseph C. Sloane, "Giorgio de Chirico and Italy." *Art Quarterly* 1, Spring, 1958, p. 4.
While de Chirico considered "the psychological origins" of Italian architecture obscure, he combined the psychological mood of the Italian piazzas with his meditations on the problematic metaphysics of this architecture. This enabled him to use the ideas as part of the foundations for his enigmatic aesthetic.\textsuperscript{101} De Chirico reflected on his method of representation and he found the "problem of what an artist should do . . . more and more disturbing." He felt that, "nothing is profound enough, nothing pure enough. Everything that has satisfied painters until now to us seems child's play; this is why we look behind barriers in search of something new. Is it a dream, or a vision?"\textsuperscript{102}

Looking behind the barrier for de Chirico did result in something new and it was evident in his response to figuration. If he could explore a philosophical perspective in his figurative description of man, he could suggest the idea of 'becoming' and therefore of evolving 'truth'. Broadly, the way he presented man was to remove him almost completely, and by suggesting absence he inevitably raised the discussion of appearance and reality. Absence that suggested presence was at the core of de Chirico's schema. At other times he was able to suggest something new and profound about the human form by his use of the mannequin-statue, making presence itself a questioning of truth. A spectral statue was a powerful solution to the figure in painting and to the problem of representation. These motionless spectres evoked not only a human presence, but also a suggestive figurative absence, even an other-worldliness. They may be the realization of his 'daemon'. The artist claimed he needed "to rid art of all that has been its familiar content until now; all subject, all idea, all thought, all symbol must be put aside."\textsuperscript{103}

De Chirico recognized that to "put aside" these symbols would require other kinds of representations of man, ones that would satisfy his intentions, "the a-metaphysical man, inclines by instinct towards an appearance of mass and height, towards a sort of architectural Wagnerianism. But we who know the signs of the metaphysical alphabet are aware of the joy and the solitude enclosed by a portico, the corner of a street, or even in a room, on the surface of a table, between the sides of a box."\textsuperscript{104} De Chirico replaced this subject with one not constrained by the real. In place of figurative conventions he chose to discuss the subject of the real.

\textsuperscript{101} G. de Chirico in M. Carrà, \textit{Metaphysical Art}, op cit. p. 91.
\textsuperscript{102} Soby, \textit{G. de Chirico}, op. cit., p. 247.
\textsuperscript{103} G. de Chirico in Soby, \textit{G. de Chirico}, ibid. p. 246.
\textsuperscript{104} de Chirico in Carrà, \textit{Metaphysical Art}, p. 91.
The elimination of man has meant that some commentators have detected an "abyssal Dionysian truth" in de Chirico's portrait of the empty city squares, unpopulated and somehow threatening. The sense of an abyss arises from intuitions of the cyclical nature of the myth, the recurrence of man's life cycle. So Ariadne becomes a more concentrated symbol of the Dionysian truth and in the words of the historian Teresa del Conde, she can be seen to "represent the wait for the unthinkable event, to wake in a divine embrace, after a long sleep of death." On her metaphysical island Ariadne is linked to Dionysos not only by her "alternation from bliss to sorrow" but by what Rainbow-Vigourt identifies as the "constant reference to water: all may be read as Dionysiac elements." The visual power of these images stems from the sense of symbolic power Ariadne presents where the piazza acts like a vast sea. Although, as Marianne Martin points out, Ariadne is "allegedly of stone and asleeep, [she] transmits an uncanny sense of spectral aliveness." This reaction highlights the Nietzschean themes that de Chirico plays with in his treatment of subjects. Marianne Martin thinks that this perceptual illusion enables de Chirico to suggest the "eternally recurrent tragedy of hope and consequent suffering, which to both German writers (Nietzsche and Hofmannsthal) was synonymous with the female principle and even with the human soul."

As an enigma the statue of Ariadne effectively represent many aesthetic zones. In sleep she represents a suspended time of hope and loss. Her dream vision embouces both past and future time, showing a mood that is balanced between sorrow and the unknown. She also presents a symbolic portrait of Dionysian abyss, counterbalanced by Apollonian form and reason. She at once gives us hope and fear and in this embodies the nature of Nietzsche's tragedy and art.

My own work shows parallels in the use of the aesthetic/cultural themes referenced by de Chirico and these parallels are discussed more fully later, in the context of de Chirico's iconography. These themes for de Chirico and for myself are deeply embedded in Nietzsche's ideas of art and tragedy. While I accept that Nietzsche's conditions are forever lost and that this Apollonian/Dionysian unification has ended, none the less, like de Chirico, I find it increasingly important to attempt to express this loss and disunity in my paintings.

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105 del Conde, Giorgio de Chirico, op. cit., p. 64.
108 Ibid.
The Enigma of the Day: The Statues Live

We should keep constant control of our thoughts and of all the images that present them, but which also have a close relationship with those we see in dreams. It is curious that in dreams no image, however strange it may be ever strikes us because of its metaphysical strength... even more inexplicable is the mystery and appearance that our mind confers on certain objects and on certain aspects of life. Psychically speaking, the fact of discovering the mysterious aspects of objects could be described as a symptom of cerebral abnormality akin to certain forms of madness. I believe that every person can undergo such abnormal moments, and that this is all the more fruitful when made manifest in an individual gifted with creative talent and clairvoyance. Art is the fatal net that catches these strange moments in flight, like mysterious butterflies, unnoticed by the innocence and distraction of ordinary men.

Giorgio de Chirico in *Metaphysical Art.*

*The Enigma of the Day and The Red Tower (fig.18)* are works that typify de Chirico’s use of Nietzschean themes, although in these works he explores the ideas through the historical symbols of Italy. The symbolism and personages of the Risorsimeto (the Italian unification) had particular significance for de Chirico and their use and selection had a number of visual roles. We have seen in an earlier chapter the artist’s challenging treatment of figuration, and the characters from the Italian unification enabled de Chirico to discuss both figuration and the kind of skepticism that accompanies the cyclical nature of history. The Apollonian-Dionysian themes in these works undergo a new development in his use of the symbolism. Nietzsche’s concept of the form-giving, sculptural nature of Apollo is given life in the statue, the shadow of a statue or in the mannequin-like constructions he uses in these works. Throughout my use of the figure I wanted to move away from representation of the real and instead to use the figure as a Nietzschean symbol. In images like *The Eternal turin, L’innocente* and *The Poem* I have attempted to create a mood of timelessness. It is one that had strong connections to the relationship between time and reality; these works were intended to belong to an ahistorical time. They were also intended to be unlocatable in place as well as time. In this respect my influence differs considerably from de Chirico.
*Autumn Meditation* (fig. 43) belongs to an early group of works that were to express de Chirico’s lasting fascination with the piazza, the public statue and the symbolism of Apollo, the soothsaying god. It is executed in an abbreviated, flat finish, the buildings have thin black outlines, and it typifies de Chirico’s loyalty to a simple, symmetrical format. We can see along a narrow and enclosed street where deep shadows fall, leading to a well-lit, sunny piazza, and we see a sea that stretches clear to the horizon. As in *The Enigma of the Autumn Afternoon* 1910 (fig. 6), the sky is bright and clear, yet there is a disturbing sense of waste and ruin. Not only are there deep cracks in the paving showing weeds sprouting but even the central marble statue seems vandalized. Has it lost its head? The sign of a shepherd’s crook lying against the wall has many possible interpretations, the most common allude to either the soothsayer or Christian symbols, but either way we sense that all truths and realities are struggling in this ravaged setting.

We can also consider the clues that lie in the choice of the statue. It appears in a similar pose in other early works by de Chirico, including *The Enigma of the Oracle* 1910 (fig. 7), where only the marble statue-head looks over a curtain at the far side of the composition. In *The Enigma of the Autumn Afternoon* it is placed before a classical building in a piazza, the figures in both these paintings taking the same pose. These figures have the same origins, and are based on a statue of the Mediaeval poet Dante Alighieri which stands before the important Renaissance church of Santa Croce in Florence (fig. 8).

In *The Enigma of the Autumn Afternoon* de Chirico described a sensation of revelation, a dream state he experienced while sitting in the Santa Croce Piazza. This famous revelation, which occurred while he was convalescing, is described by Soby as the artist’s “counterlogic [which] “functioned as an inspirational force.”[109] There are many allusions in de Chirico to the way he uses inspiration and revelation in the process of image making, but this one is very detailed.

One clear autumnal afternoon I was sitting on a bench in the middle of the Piazza Santa Croce in Florence. It was of course not the first time I had seen this square. I had just come out of a long and painful intestinal illness, and I was in a nearly morbid state of sensivity. The whole world, down to the marble of the buildings and the fountains, seemed to be convalescent. In the middle of the square rises a statue of Dante draped in a long cloak, holding his works clasped against his body, his laurel-crowned head bent thoughtfully earthward. This statue is in white marble, but time

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has given it a gray cast, very agreeable to the eye. The autumn sun, warm and unloving, lit the statue and the church façade. Then I had the strange impression that I was looking at all these things for the first time, and the composition of my picture came to my mind’s eye. Now each time I look at this painting I again see that moment. Nevertheless the moment is an enigma to me, for it is inexplicable. And I like to call the work which sprang from it an enigma.¹⁰

Looking at both these works we certainly sense that the world is ill, perhaps tragically. More importantly all the visual allusions by the artist are not in evidence in the painting of The Enigma of the Autumn Afternoon. There is no laurel-headed poet, there is not even a head and no books are in view. When we look at the antique photo of this piazza (fig. 8), what dominates the scene is the view of the Sante Croce church behind Dante, echoed in the buildings of The Enigma of the Autumn Afternoon.

In this rotation we glimpse other allusions of de Chirico, ones that challenge belief in Christian culture and established ideas. The crook in de Chirico’s paintings has allusions to both the church and the soothsayer. The de Chirico scholar Willard Bohn has traced the crook to Apollo in illustrations in books on classical art.¹¹ De Chirico reinforces this link by attaching the severed stump of a tree that is a motif from the Apollo Belvedere (fig. 9) to the left leg of the Dante form.¹² As we will see, this Apollonian allusion is persistently used throughout the artist’s work.

Not only is Apollo supreme in these references but there are further indications of the triumph of Nietzsche’s ideas. There is a bridging link between the dream and reality in de Chirico’s comments about their importance when he says, “even more inexplicable is the mystery of appearance that our mind confers on certain objects and on certain aspects of life.”¹³ The realm of Apollo, the philosopher claimed, is best likened to that of dreams. In this respect, we can appreciate that de Chirico’s entire description of the epiphany he experienced, which sets the hallucinatory register for this dream-like painting, is itself underscored by Apollo. This means that not just the inspiration for, but also the realization of Autumn Meditation is deeply connected with Nietzschean ideas about the Apollonian-Dionysian concept. The experience in the

¹⁰ ibid.
¹¹ Bohn, Solitude of the Sign, op. cit., p. 173
¹² ibid., p. 182.
Sante Croce piazza expresses Nietzsche's idea that it is "only as an aesthetic phenomenon that existence and the world are eternally justified."\textsuperscript{114}

Having seen the evolution of the statue in \textit{Autumn Meditation}, it is possible to trace the progressive realization of it in \textit{The Enigma of the Day} (fig. 11). We are again in the deserted piazza where the bleached white porticos stretch into the far distance. The elevated, frock-coated statue is half turned away from us, partially enveloped in shadow. Yet, we are given a clue that he belongs to de Chirico's earlier Apollonian piazza figures. The frock-coated nineteenth-century statue has been identified by a number of scholars as Count Camillo di Cavour. Nancy Scott traces him in numerous works and points out that he is nearly always seen from behind, but she regards him as both the figure of Cavour and de Chirico's distant, nineteenth-century father, and by this connection she suggests the idea of an Italian fatherland. Cavour was the Prime Minister of the first United Kingdom of Italy under Vittorio Emanuele II (fig. 14). He was historically perceived as the architect of the new Italy and was often identified by the eyeglasses that can be just seen in some of these works. De Chirico scholars generally agree that his main source for the Cavour statue is the 1865 public statue, \textit{Monument to Cavour}, by Odoardo Tabacchi and Antonio Tantardini in the public gardens in Milan (fig. 10).

If we accept this, then what indications are there that the figure represents a multitude of identities and significance? The accompanying iconography gives us some clues to this quality. We have seen in \textit{The Enigma of the Autumn Afternoon} that de Chirico transformed the statue of the poet Dante into a mythical, soothsaying Apollonian figure. Remember that alongside this statue is a severed tree trunk of the \textit{Apollo Belvedere} and its use recurs throughout de Chirico's frock-coated statues (fig.9).

While these statues show de Chirico's awareness of this historical period, André Breton's recollections give further insight into the artist's ideas.

The phantoms ... despite his current reticence regarding this subject, de Chirico still admits that he has not forgotten them ... he has even named two of them for me: Napoleon III and Cavour, and has informed me that he had protracted dealings with them ... one of the most important dates for de Chirico is that of the secret talks between Napoleon III and Cavour at Plombières. To the best of his knowledge, he says it is the only time that two phantoms have ever met officially, to such an effect that their inconceivable

\textsuperscript{114} Nietzsche, \textit{Tragedy}, op. cit., p. 32.
deliberations were followed by real, concrete and perfectly objective results.\textsuperscript{115}

If we accept that Napoleon and Cavour are both genuine references for de Chirico's phantoms, and given that there are identifiable visual clues throughout his work, then we can ask what role they are playing in the Apollonian-Dionysian drama.

There are a number of de Chirico works that give us an insight into links with these figures. Numerous commentators have recognized the visual similarities between the photographic portraits of Napoleon III (fig. 15) and Camillo di Cavour (fig. 10) and have observed that the characters have been meshed into a dreaming father-like figure in \textit{The Child's Brain} (fig. 12).\textsuperscript{116} While the masculine figure is suggestively feminine in body shape, showing curly black hair and long eye lashes, it also implies a virile, male sexuality. Willard Bohn considers the figure to be a clear realization of Dionysos, because it couples the god's feminine qualities with the suggestion of potent sexuality.

Clearly the painting is concerned with sexual potency... if on one level it dramatizes the progenitive poser of the Father, on another it depicts [that]... the Dionysian force is profoundly sexual, revolving about the concept of ecstasy and total oblivion. For the first time the artist is presented as a Dionysian figure... The fact that his eyes are closed indicates that he has transcended his personal consciousness and is communicating with cosmic forces.\textsuperscript{117}

The identification of this figure as Dionysos is reinforced by a later drawing, \textit{The Return} (fig. 13) 1917, where the two gods seem to appear as an Apollonian-Dionysian symbol, with their creative identities shown respectively as rapturous and sculptural. De Chirico's use and understanding of history and historical content enabled him to create a web of enigmatic symbols. In historical photographic records of the \textit{Risorgimento} Napoleon III is easily recognizable as an elegant, military man with a long, distinctive, waxed moustache; a figure who bears a strong resemblance to characters in various paintings and drawings of de Chirico, as in \textit{The Return} or \textit{The Child's Brain}. De Chirico's mysteriously feminine, moustached man with his eyes closed has been commented on repeatedly, as well as variously identified by scholars.\textsuperscript{118} Willard Bohn considers the figure in \textit{The Child's Brain} to be the first, "unforgettable" appearance of Dionysos. Bohn acknowledges that much has been said of the painting

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{115} André Breton, \textit{Le Surréalism et la peinture}, Paris, Gallimard, 1928, p. 35-36.
\bibitem{116} Bohn, \textit{Solitude of the Sign}, op. cit., p. 175.
\bibitem{117} ibid., pp. 175-176.
\bibitem{118} Bohn, \textit{Phantom Italy}, op. cit., p. 132.
\end{thebibliography}
as a comment on the father and on sexuality, but he still considers the feminine quality of the male figure, "its softness and roundness," to be a clear indication of the god.

In *The Enigma of the Day* de Chirico has turned Cavour, the father of Italian unification to stone and he stands frozen between two phallic-like towers. These towers may well represent the Mole Antonellia, an architectural landmark of Turin, yet also be considered Dionysian phallic symbols. The only indication of life lies in the form of two indistinct figures in the far distance and the fluttering pennons above the scene. Apollonian reason seems to be shrinking into the shadows and with it the fused figures of the *Risorgimento* seem defeated by the barren wasteland of *The Enigma of the Day*, and the Dionysian abyss seems imminent and enveloping.

De Chirico's interconnected web of statues and political figures is integrated into Nietzsche's creative allusions of Apollo and Dionysos. Figures like Cavour are revealed as the fused poet/dreamer/soothsayer. So we can view Cavour as the architect of the fatherland, and as a sculptural realization of Apollo as well. Apollonian wisdom, as shown in these paintings in the form of the isolated statue, remains shadowed, immobile and stationary in time. In the various paintings of this subject, the nineteenth-century statue seems eternally fixed to his base and rendered motionless, creating the haunting and enigmatic mood that is a feature of these works.

De Chirico did make some comments on the god and the oracle and his comments give an insight into the evolution of these phantom gods. He stresses their role as the artist, dreamer and poet, most particularly as a figure receptive to the oracular experience. In an earlier de Chirico painting, *The Enigma of the Oracle* (Fig. 7), we can clearly see that the god is in an oracular chamber, where the closed curtain indicates a transcendent state, and whose temple was for interpretive purposes. As de Chirico puts it:

One of the strangest and deepest sensations that prehistory has left with us is the sensation of foretelling. It will always exist. It is like an eternal proof of the senselessness of the universe. The first man must have seen auguries everywhere, he must have trembled at each step he took.¹¹⁹

In these terms it is possible to see that de Chirico's mannequins and statues are both a form of contemporary figuration and an allusion to specific philosophical ideas. De Chirico's process of ridding art of man enabled him to synthesize philosophy, myth

and the personal, for the mannequin-like figures are constructed from objects and symbols that filled the artist’s life. “The square has always obsessed my mind. I always saw squares rising like mysterious stars behind every one of my pictorial representations”. The challenge to figuration was using statues, particularly statues imbued with mythical and historical importance.

The contradiction in these scenes is Nietzschean, for they act as both silent scenes of the piazza and frozen Apollonian scenes, while also suggesting the moment of imparted wisdom. They are the moment before the curtain screening the oracle is flung back, revealing a moment of divine inspiration. Certainly, the half-shadowed statue in The Enigma of the Day appears to register a sensation, one unrelated to the inaction and stillness surrounding him. It provides a perfect setting for the moment and in this scene we see the interdependence of the Apollonian-Dionysian unity. In Nietzschean terms the genius is fused with the primal artist, “he is at once subject and object, at once poet, actor and audience.”120 In some way the whole scene is activated by us, the audience.

The heavy, incipient stillness, combined with the relevant iconography of The Enigma of the Day, suggests a hermetic message, an enigma. De Chirico’s early essay shows how he places the soothsayer in an oracular temple and we can then see how the frock-coated figure also appears to be waiting for the moment of revelation. De Chirico names these figures.

Thinking of the temples dedicated to the sea gods, ... I have often conjured up those soothsayers tending to the voice of the waves receding from that ancient land. I have pictured them head and body wrapped in a chlamys, waiting for the mysterious revealing oracle.121

There has been considerable research on de Chirico’s use of Italian history and statuary. The scholar Willard Bohn saw the evolution of these various figures as

characters taken from de Chirico’s three favorite historical periods: classical antiquity, the Renaissance, and the modern era. ... they tend to revolve around Greece and Rome which are privileged countries in [de Chirico’s] opinion and which represent the cradle of civilization.122

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120 Nietzsche, Tragedy, op. cit., p. 32.
Bohn’s argument is that de Chirico’s personae are all in some way traceable to Apollo and Dionysos. He has constructed a complex ladder of interdependent figures derived from myth and history, centering on one side with Napoleon III, Petrarch and Dionysos and alternately, Cavour, Dante and Apollo.\textsuperscript{123} Although in these works, typified by The Enigma of the Day, the statues demonstrate de Chirico’s ongoing use of a fusion of mythical, spectral figures. While Bohn’s argument is perceptive and full of insight, ultimately one wonders whether de Chirico’s works require such a rigid structure to illuminate the enigmatic, and to what extent such a formal analysis contributes to an understanding of their enigmatic force. In some sense, the Nietzschean theme of the Apollonian and the Dionysian, demands an evolving response. Bohn also does not consider the complete oeuvre of de Chirico’s imagery to be based on this same framework. He has restricted his analysis solely to the early work.

In The Red Tower (fig. 18) (fig. 18) de Chirico also used statues and architecture, but in these works the statue’s physical placement was an important key. De Chirico considered, like Schopenhauer, that the level at which public statuary was placed, particularly the statues of famous men, should not be high on columns, but on low platforms, “like those they use in Italy . . . where every marble man seems to be on a level with the passers by and to walk with them.”\textsuperscript{124} De Chirico marries the philosophical ideas of both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche to achieve this figurative realization.

In his article on Raphael, de Chirico describes the metaphysical relationship between the real and the divine, seeing it as a way to connect “statues on low pedestals and the divinities hovering a foot above the ground. All should be interpreted as a hermetic communion between the divine and the human, between logical reality and inexplicable metaphysical appearance.”\textsuperscript{125} This description takes us back to de Chirico’s early pursuit of the “daemon” in everything. He defines the statue’s role as one where placement merges with subject and therefore can be used as a visual projection of an artist’s philosophical and aesthetic methods.

\textsuperscript{123} ibid.
\textsuperscript{124} G. de Chirico in Carrà, Metaphysical Art, op. cit., p. 90.
Turin

To recognize de Chirico’s Nietzschean allusion it is necessary to consider the mythical status he attached to Turin. Although de Chirico is known to have visited the northern Italian town only occasionally, he always regarded it as the city of Nietzsche. As one scholar puts it, “Certainly, there can be no doubt that de Chirico was powerfully drawn to Turin - if more in his imagination than in reality - because of the city’s connections with Nietzsche.” 126

The classical qualities of the architecture, along with its relevance to Nietzsche, must have influenced de Chirico, although his first visit in 1911 was brief and there seems little evidence that he ever spent any length of time there. Given this, de Chirico still seems aware of the poetic and classical allusion Nietzsche made, even including some of the recognizable symbols in his paintings, which can be seen in Nietzsche’s description:

What a dignified and serious city it is! ... Aristocratic tranquillity is what has been preserved here in everything . . . And for the feet as for the eyes it is a classical place! . . . Such a changeable climate makes these arcades rather necessary; but they are spacious, they don’t feel oppressive. Evenings on the Po Bridge: superb! Beyond Good and Evil!127

The relevance of Nietzsche’s references must have struck de Chirico strongly, having come from the classical world of Athens. The interest in Nietzsche started in Munich, where de Chirico seems to have begun reading philosophy seriously. It was while studying in Munich that de Chirico became enthusiastic about Schopenhauer and eventually Nietzsche, but his description begins with a fellow student.

He was obsessed by the philosophical ideas of Nietzsche. At the same time I observed that he, in common with everyone who had read Nietzsche, had not in fact understood what constituted the true novelty discovered by this philosopher. This novelty is a strange and profound poetry infinitely mysterious and solitary, which is based on the Stimmung (which can be translated as atmosphere) . . . This extraordinary sensation can be found . . . in Italian cities, and in Mediterranean cities like Genoa or Nice; but the Italian city par excellence where this extraordinary phenomenon appears is Turin.128

126 N. Scott also makes the point that de Chirico’s initial visit in 1911 was dominated by his persistent, gastric illness. N. Scott, The Mystery and Melancholy, op. cit., p. 51.
De Chirico used the expansive city squares of Turin as the setting for some of his Italian piazzas. Turin still looks much like it did at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the architect Guarino Guarini (1624-83) planned a Baroque city, laid out with grace and precision, showing long rows of porticos, similar to de Chirico’s shadowed, recurrent porticos. As Paolo Baldacci points out various “monuments to bourgeois political figures and conquering kings, the mythic heroes of the Risorgimento” subsequently came to populate the city.  

In the southeast of the inner city is the Mole Antonelliana. It is a vast, 165-metre high landmark named after its architect Antonelli, which has an enormous domed roof and spire (fig. 19). Originally built as a synagogue, it was even used for this purpose, but was acquired by the city and used as a shrine to Victor Emmanuel and the Risorgimento. The Mole is positioned almost adjacent to the Via Carlo Alberto, where Nietzsche briefly lived in the corner building, on the fourth floor. The shadowed, enclosed street in the foreground of The Red Tower (fig.18) has been identified as the Via Carlo Alberto, which is regarded as Nietzsche’s last independently chosen address. Nancy Scott suggests that the painting not only is suggestive of Nietzsche, but it may also represent the location of Nietzsche’s final breakdown. It is reputed that Nietzsche’s final collapse was in Turin, where at the sight of a horse flailed in the Piazza Carlo Alberto in January 1889, it is said, he broke-down and wept, embracing the horse.

The darkened walkway in the foreground of The Red Tower (fig.18) leads directly to a view of a circular red tower in the background. Although the sky is sunny and blue, the shadowed foreground has an ominous, enclosed mood. While the tower is surrounded by a number of small houses there is an empty, unpopulated sense to the setting. The part silhouette of the Carlo Alberto equestrian statue is obscured and partially visible across the walkway. Despite the painting’s mood of dormant inactivity there are many clues to suggest Nietzschean themes of Apollo and Dionysos. The equestrian shadow is clearly part of the Carlo Alberto statue (fig. 17). Carlo Alberto was the king of the Sardinian Empire up to 1849 and this monument was sculptured by Carlo Arochetti and inaugurated in 1861. Alberto was the monarch who led Northern

130 J. Slune, “Giorgio de Chirico and Italy”, Art Quarterly 1, Spring, 1958, p. 10.
131 It is assumed to be via Carlo Alberto by the position necessary to view the Mole Antonelliana, see N. Scott, The Mystery and Melancholy, op. cit., p. 80.
132 Ibid., p. 58.
Italy in the early stages of the War for Independence, followed by his famous son Victor Emmanuel (Figure 16). Historically, Alberto represents both a crucial stage in the history of Italian modernity as well the failure of this opportunity. In the crossed web of interconnected references to the Risorgimento and Nietzsche we see de Chirico’s description of not only the failure of the future but also the relentless recurrence of tragic outcomes. Bohn argues that “in painting after painting de Chirico’s vision of the world takes the form of a series of dualisms arranged in paradigmatic fashion.”

But essentially, the central figures are a Nietzschean construct. As Willard Bohn suggests, these historical figures are connected to de Chirico’s daemons, described in his writings, and ultimately linked to Dionysos. As we have already seen, de Chirico considers his figurative statues to be floating like other-world creatures, slightly elevated. Yet in this work we can see that the Dionysian abyss of the darkened foreground is not softened by the sunny world beyond. The daemon equestrian statue hovers somewhere between the two worlds, neither enveloped by darkness nor illuminated by the day. Nietzsche’s creative unity remains unreconciled and unconsolated.

It is also worth considering the role here of the Mole Antonellia, a rectangular building with numerous stories, having enclosed columned walkways surrounding the various levels. If we accept that this is the Carlo Alberto equestrian monument, then it is in the piazza of the same name and therefore adjacent to the Mole. De Chirico has frequently metamorphosed versions of the Mole with other architectural references (Figs 20-24) and the repetitive columns are usually represented in de Chirico’s numerous paintings of the building. We see it as mostly columns in The Red Tower (fig. 18) (fig. 20), whereas in Nostalgia of the Infinite (fig. 21), it has become rectangular to the roof. It is possible that there are other architectural references for the building in The Red Tower (fig. 18). Nancy Scott considers that it could also refer to Rome’s Castel Santi’Angelo, which played an important role in the Risorgimento, serving as barracks and a prison. She argues that there are dual Risorgimento references in de Chirico’s architecture and sculpture, as well as double references to Italian cities, supporting the view that de Chirico deliberately employed dualities in creating his metaphysical world. So de Chirico suggests not only the frozen remnants of Italian modernity, but also of Nietzschean dualities and gods.

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133 Bohn, Paradigmatic Method, op. cit., p. 37.
134 Bohn, The Return, op. cit., p. 132.
135 ibid., p. 80.
Numerous scholars have traced the historical identities of de Chirico's statues, finding them to have separate classical and political origins. The artist uses a specific context for them. They are placed in the Italian piazza and reveal de Chirico's allusions of figuration that challenge truth and reality. De Chirico's imagery can then be taken to be a commentary on modernism, certainly on the way contemporary imagery can interpret modern man. Soby expressed this idea,

To suppose that de Chirico was saying something, whether altogether consciously or not, about the lamentable state of his country in terms which arouse a romantic, but still definite, awareness of just this condition of suspended animation. He will recall past times, but will stress the revolutionary period and, by contrast, the presumed paralysis of the present. Approached from this point of view, many - though by no means all - of his examples fall into a consistent pattern.

We have seen that Ariadne embodies qualities central to the Apollo/Dionysos hypothesis; given this, it is then possible to consider that the role of the statue in The Red Tower (fig.18) and The Enigma of the Day operates in similar terms despite the different setting and content.

Both paintings show that de Chirico not only intended the statue to be the central figurative focus of the image, but also that The Red Tower (fig.18), even with the statue removed, leaves only the silhouette as the subject. Despite the darkened statue, de Chirico achieves a figurative quality to the painting. De Chirico said he wanted to rid art of

man as a guide, or as a means to express symbol, sensation or thought, once and for all to free itself from the anthropomorphism that shackles sculpture: to see everything, even man, in its quality of thing. This is the Nietzschean method. Applied to painting, it might produce extraordinary results. That is what I try to demonstrate in my pictures.

De Chirico's selection of specific figures from the Risorgimento opens a number of possibilities for him as a painter. These characters are a means for discussing ancient and modern Italy, they are a visual reference to antiquity and the Renaissance and they are traceable to Apollo and Dionysos. So by their symbolic

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136 Most notable are Willard Bohn, Nancy Scott, Joseph Sloane and Maurizio Fagiolo dell'Arco, although James Soby generally limits the identification of the statues to Victoriana, Soby, G. de Chirico, op. cit., p. 65.
137 J. Sloane, "De Chirico and Italy", op. cit., p. 9.
139 G. de Chirico in G. de Chirico, Soby, op. cit., p. 251.
integration, de Chirico was able to present a poetic interpretation of his historical and philosophical concerns. Thus, the embedded references in de Chirico’s images act as important signifiers and show the complex web of interconnectedness to his ideas.

There are numerous influences from de Chirico’s in my own work. I have particularly drawn on the possibilities of identities as fluid symbols of my ideas and as signifiers of the specific philosophical ideas associated with the innocence of becoming.

I have been asked at my exhibitions about the ambiguity of gender in the portraits. I have always seen this as another component of the enigmatic as well as a method of increasing the distance in the personal portrait. In works like The Poem or The Eternal Turin the sense of mystery is enhanced by the duality and unidentifiable nature of the figures. Their sexuality/gender is only a superficial reference to the greater Apollonian/Dionysian duality.

I wanted also to suggest the necessary innocence of my figures where gender is excluded; all my works have been created with an overriding emphasize on the sub-title of the exegesis. I intend my figures to project the moment necessary when revelation occurs and ‘becoming’ is possible.

Discussion of de Chirico’s use of statues/shadows/silhouettes of statues and hopefully points out his avoidance of material presence; that is, de Chirico made figurative paintings without portraying figures.

My work follows this representation of people/figures by absence, half-presences, or allusions of presence. This is why questions about the gender of my portraits are puzzling to me and alien to my concerns. De Chirico taught me that I don’t have to paint people in order to present humanity. It is not important whether the figures are recognized male or female with my schema. What is important, is the kind of presence I have created in The Unity or The Sanatorium, just like in de Chirico’s work.

In The Unity there is a strong figurative presence even though it extends outside the frame. There is no head or shoulders but this is a ‘presence’. It has an identity.
Mercury’s Voyage - Visionary Messages

In what a marvelous and new and at the same time terrible and ironic relationship with the totality of existence do I feel myself to stand with my knowledge! I have discovered for myself that the old human and animal world, indeed the entire prehistory and past of all sentient being, works on, loves on, hates on, thinks on in me. I have suddenly awoken in the midst of this dream but only to the consciousness that I am dreaming and that I have to go on dreaming in order not to be destroyed: as the sleep-walker has to go on dreaming in order not to fall. What is ‘appearance’ to me now? Certainly not the opposite of some kind of being - what can I possibly say about being of any kind that is not a predicate of its appearance! Certainly not a dead mask placed over an unknown ‘x’, which could, if one wished, be removed! Appearance is for me the active and living itself, which goes so far in its self-mockery as to allow me to feel that there is nothing here but appearance and will-o’-the-wisp and a flickering dance of spirits - that among all these dreamers I, too, the ‘man of knowledge’, dance my dance, that the man of knowledge is a means of spinning out the earthly dance and to that extent one of the masters-of-ceremonies of existence, and that the sublime consistency and unity of all knowledge is and will be perhaps the supreme means of preserving the universality of dreaming and the mutual intelligibility of all these dreamers and thereby the continuance of the dream.

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science.

The following three works, Double Self-Portrait, The Two Masks and The Meditation of Mercury, reveal the way de Chirico fused images of the self with philosophy and myth. These works in particular explore the specifics of visual duality in terms of Apollo and Dionysos. Their figurative forms lend themselves to a Nietzschean framework and reinforce the concept of dual creativity that underpins many of the artist’s paintings. This is the area where my work most overlaps with de Chirico’s themes. It is in this territory that I see my work intersecting with the enigmatic content outlined in the exegesis. First I would like to test the authenticity of these origins by analyzing the following works. Later I will show my relationship with these ideas.

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The *Double Self-Portrait* (fig. 27) shows a fusion of motifs of antiquity and the present. The artist is shown in it with his chin resting on his hand (reminiscent of Dürer’s *Melancholia*), head turned three-quarters toward the viewer with a look of query or dismay. In profile, on the opposite side of the image, the artist is seen as a marble statue, the shoulder flattened and facing outward. The curtain behind them is open showing a clear sky and a view of the buildings in the street. While it is apparent that the two figures portray the same person, they also represent complete opposites. While this self-portrait shows two polarized figures, it also shows the artist as two identities. It demonstrates de Chirico’s use of contrasting duality: darkness against light, the mutable with the statuesque; in essence, life contrasted with art.

In common with other various self-portraits, *Double Self-Portrait* shows a reference to the seventeenth century Bodegón genre (fig. 27). The genre is characterized by a foreground shelf displaying food and still-life objects and was used as a form of explicitly metaphysical art, practised mainly in Spain at that time. The Bodegón was a way the artist used still life to reflect symbolically on existence, mortality, the physical world, spirituality and other philosophical questions. While de Chirico never formally referred to an interest in this genre, he was known to be a scholar of seventeenth and eighteenth century art and it is possible to see these works as a wry play on his philosophical interests. De Chirico’s *Double Self-Portrait* suggests not only the specifics of a dual creative theme but also, by the use of the Bodegón, visual references and stylistic allusions to art, ideas and the metaphysical. In this portrait we can see how the artist has used the representation of self as both Nietzsche’s subject as artist while “liberated from his individual will and become a medium, through which the only truly existent subject celebrates his redemption through illusion.”

*Double Self-Portrait* is one of a vast body of self-portraits completed by the artist throughout his life, totalling something like one hundred works in over seventy years of painting. The 1911 work, with the words inscribed along the bottom *Et quid amabo nisi quod enigma est?* (What shall I love if not the enigma?) (fig. 34), is frequently quoted as the most apt description of the artist. Many of these works explore the idea of dualities and historical art genres. In both *Self-Portrait with Mercury* (fig. 32) and *Self-Portrait with Euripides* (fig. 33), the artist enlists not only the traditional format of art history but he also employs divinities and tragic writers to inform the discussion. We can see in both these works that the hands of the statues frame and holds the artist in place. The choice of mythical and poetic identities played a specific

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141 Nietzsche, *Tragedy*, op. cit. p. 32.
role for the artist and his choice of the Greek God, Mercury, is no exception. Mercury (or Hermes as he was also known) was considered by alchemists to be both the God of science and a patron of travelers, vagabonds and thieves, and he thus symbolizes both messenger and thief. He is usually represented with a winged hat and sandals, and carrying a wand (termed a Caduceus) with white ribbons. The Caduceus, often mistaken for two entwined serpents, is capable of inducing sleep, in part due to Hades having engaged Mercury to summon the dying by using his wand upon their eyes.¹⁴²

In this same painting the artist also uses the exploration of the self as a means of including mythical or classical identities. De Chirico shows himself emerging, three-quarters turned to the viewer with Mercury in profile. The traditional foreground shelf of the Bodegón is in position, except that instead of a metaphysical still life, we have only the artist and his alter-ego god to contemplate. The spatial organization of the painting appears to have the two figures merged, as if Mercury were emanating from de Chirico’s body. The shadowed foreground gives the impression of the artist only partly revealed and Mercury’s image appears like the other half of the artist, the god-like half, the two fragments creating the total identity. Mercury’s lyre is visible behind the artist’s shoulder, while the gesture of the hand is arresting and would seem to indicate an incipient event or sound. Unlike the Self-portrait with the Statue of Euripides (fig. 33), the figures are shown to be in the same space, where the playwright is obviously distinctly behind the artist. Both figures have their eyes wide open and staring, they even mirror each other’s hand gestures. The portrait testifies to “Mercury’s roie ε de Chirico’s special protector and alter-ego.”¹⁴³ De Chirico’s use of the various mythical identities like Ariadne or Mercury can be understood as personalized projections of the artist’s metaphysical world. As Maurizio Fagiolo dell’Arco puts it, “For de Chirico the statue became an alter ego: Hermes from the Museo delle Terme or Euripides from the Vatican symbolized his sense of melancholy in the face of the classical past.”¹⁴⁴

Another self-portrait de Chirico painted was of himself as part statue, part figure (fig. 37). In this work, the lower half of the figure appears fossilized or frozen.

¹⁴³ Rainbow-Vigourt, Giorgio de Chirico, op. cit., p. 225.
Thus, as the viewer’s eyes move up the portrait, there is a sense of the figure coming alive, while the head is naturalistic and the eyes directed straight at the viewer. Like the *Double Self-Portrait* this work also has a curtain drawn aside. The image has a fantastic, false reality about it but the overall impression is of an awakening figure. One of the hands is noticeably whiter than the other, reinforcing the impression of a figure being slowly thawed. The work gives another insight into the use of a contrasting dualism; de Chirico has recognized both the sculptural illusion and the formlessness of Nietzschean perspectivism.

In *Meditation of Mercury* we see a different view of Mercury (fig. 40), using Praxiteles’ head of *Hermes* (fig. 38) we see the eyes are darkened, downcast and inward looking; we see his entwined “opiate’s rod” in the foreground leaning against an enclosed wall. The open foreground suggests another Bodegón and leads down an enclosed space to a window-like view of Mercury, who is gazing transfixed, only his upper torso visible. Given that Greeks used to place a marble head of Mercury at signposts to indicate the way, we can see Mercury as part signpost and part messenger. Yet what destiny is he signposting? His semi-sleep state conjures up Hades and the dream of descent, while the framed sweet biscuits stand on the right. The works present an invitation to set time aside and enter another logic. The artist’s wife, Isabella Far, claimed that “Greek mythology was so present for de Chirico that the real and the unreal stopped having well defined boundaries in his mind.” The artist has used elements from both antiquity and the present in order to discuss his metaphysical questions.

*Hermetic Melancholy* is an almost identical version of the same painting. De Chirico has again used the Praxiteles’ head to suggest hermetic qualities. The statue also provides another layer of the Dionysos myth. It was Mercury who saved Dionysos as a child by sewing him into the thigh of Zeus, so the use of Praxiteles’ sculpture evokes Dionysian themes, for a complete view of the statue shows Mercury (Hermes) holding the infant Dionysos in his arms. Given de Chirico’s feelings about his father, it is possible to view the painting’s paternal perspective. Milly Heyd implies that the way the artist decided to crop the view of the statue has further significance.

De Chirico . . . had mentioned Praxiteles’ *Hermes* in the beginning of his memoirs as representing perfection. Yet, the artist never


146 Dionysos is sometimes called the twice-born or double-door child.
depicted the complete sculpture in which the god holds a little boy.147

The allusion to the little boy suggests some sort of fantasy by the artist and, while this interpretation gives a psychological perspective to the image, the use of the statue remains consistent with the artist's overall sculptural personages. The surrounding objects of *Hermetic Melancholy*, such as the contained, rotund structure in the foreground, suggests another oracular enclosure, while the enigmatic forms that lie on the floor point to mystical and magical powers. De Chirico claimed, “Symbols of a superior reality are often to be seen in geometric forms. For example, the triangle has served from antiquity, as indeed it still does today in the theosophists’ doctrine, as a mystical and magical symbol, and it certainly often awakens a sense of uneasiness and even of fear in the onlooker, even if he is ignorant of this tradition.” 148 De Chirico shows us that his painted symbols must be approached as signs from another world, and possibly that this world belongs to magical antiquity, or a fearful underworld. Milly Heyd discusses the melancholy aspect of *Hermetic Melancholy*, suggesting the geometric forms allude to dislocation and separation.

The forms, here explicitly associated with melancholy, have a clear visual source in the Dürer engraving, *Melancholia I* in which the melancholic figure holding the compass represents the saturnine or depressive temperament. The latter's melancholy mood is conveyed not only by his sad expression but also by the contrast between the perfect roundness of the sphere resting beside him and the imperfect form of the complex, angular block above.149

That de Chirico drew on history and art is well established, but it is important to see how successfully he merged these references with his own emotional and creative interests. Milly Heyd detects a strong emotional content in his work.150 These strong emotions are achieved by his contrasting of, not only the geometry of antiquity or the metaphysics of Dürer, but also the nineteenth-century Vienna of Otto Weininger and the vestiges of the *Risorgimento*.

The wide-ranging nature of topics and genres also contribute to a sense of philosophical voyaging. William Rubin saw his use and integration of various historical periods as a way of discussing the effect of modernity and considered that by

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149 Heyd, *De Chirico*, op. cit., p. 97.
150 ibid.
“subverting classicism, by turning it inside out, he communicated the singular malaise of modern life.”

This subversion of classicism also opens the discussion of the other great malaise of modern art, technical realization. One aspect of this was the way de Chirico used classical and historical iconography and argued strongly for a persistent pursuit of drawing. “Statues teach the exactitude of proportions and of drawing, they teach the logic of forms and of details, and the lyricism of immobility.”

The artist uses this lyrical immobility of the statue as a trigger in an enigmatic world, to enter the trance state of the dreamer. De Chirico’s metaphysical images are populated by sleeping, transfixed figures, their eyes closed or heads turned away, or simply, have no eyes at all. The art historian William Rubin’s view was that de Chirico’s images are “more like those we actually see in dreams”. However, he fully recognized that “de Chirico shuns the fantastical almost entirely. (His mannequins were an exception, but even these probably derive from storewindow figures and tailors’ dummies).”

This accentuates a core element in de Chirico’s iconography, for in his reality the actual dependence on real objects is a method of challenging the relationship between appearance and reality.

The allusion to dreams, given the numerous sleeping figures, produces one of the most notable sensations in de Chirico’s images with commentators defining this enigmatic quality as a pervading silence. William Rubin identifies this sensation.

Sensations of sound, psychiatrists observe, are extremely rare in dreams, and in this connection the Leopardian silence that prevails in de Chirico’s pictures is noteworthy. It is however, a pregnant rather than a calm silence, charged with elusive, nightmarish foreboding. (Writing, in Sur le Silence, of the nature of great cataclysms, de Chirico makes a point of warning us to ‘beware of the silence’ that precedes them.)

If a notable response to de Chirico’s imagery has been identified as the sense of silence then how does this contribute to his overall visual scheme? How does he produce the sensation of silence? For a sense of charged or elusive silence does indeed pervade these works and it contributes to the overall enigmatic mood of the imagery. A key factor is in the sense of figurative presence, yet on further examination, we only find statues or mannequins or sometimes only shadows. These figures may even be blind, as the artist Jean Cocteau comments.

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152 Martin, Late de Chirico, op. cit., p. 12.
154 ibid.
Many of Chirico's paintings are blind, but none of them are deaf. We are assured that deaf people are more unhappy than blind ones. However, the deaf man belongs to comedy and the blind one to tragedy.\textsuperscript{155}

Cocteau's commentary on de Chirico goes so far as to link the silence to Nietzschean themes, for the invoking of blindness gives access to a transcendent vision, yet also a tragic one. This duality is the realization of Nietzsche's condition for art, a condition recognizing that the truth would probably kill us, "because of its devastating ugliness". So accepting Nietzsche's argument, art provides some remedy, some affirmation that alleviates any suggestion of pessimism in art.\textsuperscript{156}

De Chirico selects subjects that give the possibility of constructing an automythography: thus the myth of Ulysses (de Chirico's wanderings), the myth of the Argonauts in search of the Golden Fleece (the twin brothers search for a creative vision), and the myth of the Dioscuri (Breton was to say that de Chirico and Savinio were almost inseparable).\textsuperscript{157}

By referring to cycles of time as well as historical symbols, de Chirico was able to demonstrate the permeable, contemporaneous nature of myth, personalizing aspects and identities for his visual purpose.

*The Two Sisters* (fig. 43) is an example of a recurrent visual theme in de Chirico's work and he produced numerous versions of it, including another version of *The Two Sisters* (fig. 29), *Metaphysical Muses* (fig. 28 and fig. 30) and *Two Masks* (fig. 31). This series of mask paintings is a clear visual demonstration of an interdependent unity, consistent with an Apollonian-Dionysian concept and one that recognizes that this unity was no longer possible. Given that *The Birth of Tragedy* uses Apollo and Dionysos for an investigation of what is celebrated in tragedy, the recurrent two figures in de Chirico's work can be seen to represent, in Daniel Chapelle's words, "the kind of existence and the kind of understanding of existence of which tragic art is a product and a celebration".\textsuperscript{158}

*Two Sisters* shows two heads, which although not human figures or immediately identifiable, are figurative. The hollow-headed, red figure in the


\textsuperscript{156} Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, op. cit., p. 132.


\textsuperscript{158} Chapelle, *Nietzsche*, op. cit., p. 71.
foreground has large, doorway-like eyes that are empty spaces, and which show into the black interior of the head. Directly behind her is an angular piece of wood separating the second head, which is elliptical, white and without any surface definition, aside from two lines inscription the circumference. What evidence do we have for thinking that these figures represent a Nietzschean perspective? We know that the character of Dionysos eliminates all discrete entities and is representative of a primal oneness, whereas Apollo is known as the soothsaying god of illusion, dream and imagist art. While it is apparent de Chirico has set up a distinct visual contrast in the two heads it is also obvious that the characteristic that binds them is sight or lack of it. If we look at the Apollo of Piombino (fig. 41), we not only see the characteristic Grecian curls that match the red figure but the bronze Apollo also has hollow eyes.

If we look at the proto-surrealist Giorgio de Chirico’s The Two Sisters (1914), the subject is depicted in a way that is no longer an illustration of a real experience but consists of obviously invented forms situated in a strange fictive space. What we are made acutely aware of are the eyes, or rather the absence of eyes. One sister’s eyes are made of looped threads like a blindfold calling attention to the surface, while the other has two empty cavernous sockets resembling de Chirico’s portals to the unknown. Together, they suggest exterior and interior states of mind. 159

De Chirico’s uses of the two contrasting figures is to connect the viewer to an important metaphysical activity and, given the striking visual treatment of the figure’s vision, we are connected to representative qualities of Apollo and Dionysos and therefore ultimately to a Nietzschean perspective of creativity. Daniel Chapelle touches on Dionysos as the eternal mask-wearer.

The images from tragedy, the masks of Dionysos, serve as a transfiguring mirror of the world... Thus Dionysos, the eternal wearer of the world’s ever-changing masks, becomes Nietzsche’s grand symbol for the yes-saying spirit that affirms the world as a process of eternal becoming. 160

Despite the various parallels and influences that have been established regarding the interpretation of de Chirico’s work, his ideas are linked both to myth and psychoanalysis. While these may offer views of the way imagery has dealt with the subject of sight in twentieth-century art, it fails to trace the destruction of sight to myth (via Oedipus) and then later to psychoanalysis. In this sense de Chirico has interpreted

160 Chapelle, Nietzsche, op. cit., pp. 74-75.
myth for his own purposes, making blindness in these images operate as a transforming vision.

Certainly, the artist’s reading of philosophy, particularly Nietzsche, opened up the possibilities of a discussion of reality and truth and a number of times de Chirico used a symbol Nietzsche refers to. “The problem of the value of truth came before us - or was it we who came before the problem? Who of us is Oedipus here? Who the Sphinx?”161 De Chirico’s images seem to ask this question, specifically about the problem of illusion and truth. “We can still attempt all aesthetics, including the appearance of the human figure, since through working and meditating upon such problems, facile and deceitful illusions are no longer possible. Friends of a new knowledge, of new philosophies, we can at last smile with sweetness upon the charms of art.”162

While he may present a twentieth century view that has parallels to a psychoanalytic framework, de Chirico’s central reference is essentially antique. Both Nietzsche and Freud used myth as a means of categorizing conditions in contemporary society, by constructing modern metaphors from antique mythology. (De Chirico is believed to be the first artist to read Freud, certainly his excellent German gave him access to some of Nietzsche’s and Freud’s writings not long after publication.) As we know Nietzsche formulated his Apollo-Dionysos discussion to ultimately show that “art, and not morality, is presented as the truly metaphysical activity of man.”163

The artist draws on Nietzsche’s questioning of reality to create a poetic manifestation of the Apollo-Dionysian idea in sculptural figures. In The Two Masks de Chirico has questioned the idea of seeing, so it follows that as an artist the eyes would act as a site for both internalized dreaming as well as a focus for external reality. The axiomatic relationship between these two states is central in the series of the sisters and masks, as it is in the self-portraits. Rainbow-Vigourg makes a valuable point about the disturbing ambiguity of these images which she regards as provoking a new awareness for the viewer.

But the depersonalization of men through representation in abstract constructions does not have only negative connotations. In fact, not only are no values assumed, but these constructions also seem to be the negative signs of some past values, which

163 Nietzsche, Tragedy, op. cit., p. 5.
perhaps are destroyed and reborn through their very embodiment.164

De Chirico's description of blinded sight can also be seen as a process of rebirth showing the artist's influences that stem from a Nietzschean framework. De Chirico citing the early Greeks, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche particularly, saw art as being liberated by philosophy and poetry. He focused on the visual contrast possible in the representation of eyes, of their interior and exterior states. This is also an apt description for the themes of Apollo and Dionysos and certainly one consistent with his expressed interests, for de Chirico claimed that he wanted to create the poetry and novelty he found in Nietzsche.165

In both *The Jewish Angel* and *The Two Masks* the artist has used descriptive marks on the head to describe the eyes and the essential opposition in Apollo and Dionysos. "The contrast between the geometrical and the serpentine elements in the picture conveys a sense of conflict. It is as if the purified pieces of wood, which are devoid of any human emotion, contrast with another level of existence, snakelike passion and primal sin."166 Milly Heyd points out the choice of contrasting material for the substance of the two heads.

A visual struggle thus occurs between the Apollonian and Dionysian, or between the forces of repression and that which is repressed, terminology with which de Chirico was familiar, from his reading of Nietzsche.167

The de Chirico scholar, Willard Bohn, has researched the foundations of the artist's vision extensively and considers it takes the "form of a series of dualisms" which he regards as suggesting "certain basic oppositions".168 It becomes apparent that the images of the contrasting dualism are demonstrated in the way that the figures are composed and constructed, with the varying surface treatments helping to suggest their internal significance and difference. They are composed and lit to highlight this and openly demonstrate difference, while at the same time they seem inseparably bonded.

Nietzsche's themes become apparent in de Chirico's visual allusions to conflict and creativity, symbolized by Apollonian form-giving in the face of Dionysian

166 Heyd, *de Chirico*, op. cit.
intoxication. The philosopher Daniel Chapelle's description of Nietzsche's ideas can be used to show de Chirico's interpretation of the mask.

The coexistence of Apollo and Dionysos in tragedy means that this art form expresses both the element of discrete appearances in individuation and the element of perpetual reabsorption into the primordial undifferentiated flow of life. Put differently, tragedy contains both eternal creation and eternal destruction. Nietzsche's notion of the Dionysian mask in tragedy captures the idea of coexistence between eternally new manifestations and their eternally unchanging undercurrent. 169

De Chirico's Two Masks seem to defy both interpretation and a definition of being located in a fixed historical period, as do all the similar works on this theme. As one of the scholars who have considered the origins of de Chirico's figures, Robert Melville believes they arise from an aesthetic debt to Rousseau. Melville attributes particular significance to de Chirico's treatment of eyes. He regards the male figure in de Chirico's painting, The Child's Brain as

not a portrait of a remembered person but a construction representing a remembered reaction to a person, and as such it is the eyes that most draw his comments. The closing of the eyes is one of many delicate steps taken after the initial leap. The image is sufficiently intransigent... the doll-like, waxy lids and horrifyingly demure lashes are disquieting. It is impossible to guess what life there is behind the lids... The lids seal up the passions of the figure, keep it unaware of its exposure and compel it to remain in its place, a symbolic construction amidst symbolical objects. 170

We have Dionysos made manifest within de Chirico's imagery and reflecting the primordial qualities inherent in the idea. Melville regards de Chirico's specific debt to Rousseau as a quality of stillness, claiming the stillness and impenetrable quality of his figures are suggestive of an encounter.

It is a recipe which de Chirico used in his early period with great brilliance. Perhaps the clearest example is The Two Mannequins of The Red Tower (fig.18), which depicts the meeting of two studio lay figures without arms and supported on metal frames. 171

169 Chapelle, Nietzsche, op. cit., p. 74.
170 Melville also considers that Soby's comments do not do justice to this image and do not communicate "the faintest idea of the beautiful and passionate coherence of what is almost a manifest content of the painting; in a sense, we are confronted by a spontaneous narrative picture, and as such it tells a complex story with a consummate economy of means unequalled outside the art of Sassetti and Bosch's final version of the Temptation of St. Anthony". Robert Melville, "Rousseau and Chirico" Scottish Arts and Letters I, 1944, p. 34
171 ibid., p. 33.
Melville considers that the artist attempted to create a consoling vision in the marriage of these two figures, and reconciling these two polarities, gives this quality to the representations of the mannequins. For in this painting "they appear to be powerlessly yearning towards one another, and this picture is an exquisitely poignant expression of romantic love".\textsuperscript{172}

While this interpretation can be seen as offering an account of the imagery, the "powerlessly yearning" figures are also recognizable as a poetic description of Apollo and Dionysos and their antagonistic co-existence. De Chirico's preferential treatment of vision inevitably connects his ideas to philosophical views of reality and truth, so it is possible to see the eyes as doorways, not only to his aesthetic vision but to a possible transcendent state. In the combination of symbols we experience the complexity and profundity of his imagery, understanding that "throughout his entire metaphysical career, the artist would 'owe nothing to anyone'. Indeed it is precisely this aspect of his work that makes it so difficult to decipher".\textsuperscript{173}

My own work has been inspired by de Chirico's individualistic and creative interpretation of myth. In works like \textit{The Dioscuri}, \textit{The Dream} and \textit{The Mysterious Union} I found visual expression for my personal experiences within these mythical terms. I used the figure in a variety of paintings because of their symbolic personal potential in relation to myth and philosophy.

In \textit{The Dioscuri} the female figure emerges from a curtain, although it is not clear whether she has come from behind the drapery or is simply standing in front of it. She walks but with her eyes closed, neither asleep nor blind but suggestive of a more dominant inner vision. This inner vision of the artist is an eternal and transcendent force and one that is essential to the creative process of becoming.

The figure carries a tiny horse, symbolic of the horses that belonged to the twin Dioscuri. The single representation of the horse alludes to the disunity of Apollonian/Dionysian themes as well as the alienation in contemporary life from the tragic in art. I have embraced Nietzsche's view of the tragic in art as a both a product as well as a celebration.

\textsuperscript{172} ibid.
\textsuperscript{173} Bohn, \textit{Giorgio de Chirico}, op. cit., p. 35.
In works like *The Eternal Turin*, *The Mysterious Union* and *The Poem* I have used the curtain to convey the immobility and silent mood that characterizes the transcendent.

In *The Unity* and *The Eternal Turin* the mood of stillness is a condition for an encounter and I created the sense of frozen time to convey this. These figures are consciously still, not outwardly engaged yet their statuesque immobility is suggestive of other states of being or becoming. I have made the curtain an indicator of how the territory they occupy is neither closed or open but an active, metaphysical space. One where I can express ideas of becoming.

This is particularly relevant to *The Sanitarium, Turin* where the physical space is defined by the curtain. The only indication of a figurative presence is the partially revealed legs and feet.

I have made this painting a visual description of a state of becoming by showing something that is only partially revealed and barely defined in spatial or figurative terms. The person behind the curtain does not exist primarily for the sake of anything else, the world he inhabits is the only world, he has no goal, he is not conscious of teleology, he is simply becoming.
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The Endless Voyage: Ulysses and The Bathhouses

How far the perspectival character of existence extends or whether it has any other character at all, whether an existence without interpretation, without 'meaning' would not become 'meaninglessness', whether on the other hand all existence is not interpreting existence - this, as it is only reasonable, cannot be determined even by the most assiduous and painfully conscientious analysis and self-examination of the intellect: since in the course of this analysis the human intellect cannot avoid viewing itself in its perspectival forms and only in them. We cannot see round our own corner: it is a hopeless piece of curiosity to want to know what could exist for other species of intellect and perspective: for example whether any kind of being could experience time in a reverse direction or alternately forwards and backwards (which would posit a different direction of life and a different conception of cause and effect). But I think that today we are at least far from the ludicrous immorality of decreeing from out of our corner that perspectives are permissible only from out of this corner. The world has rather once again become for us 'infinite': insofar as we cannot reject the possibility that it contains in itself infinite interpretations.

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science.

I selected the following group of de Chirico's paintings for slightly different reasons than the previous works. As an artist I had considered them many times, not only from a formal perspective or for the odd, dizzy compositional structures but for the profound and enigmatic feelings they always provoked in me. At times I would refer back to them and always be moved by their unspeakable mystery.

Irregardless of how many times I looked at these works I was unable to penetrate beyond their surface content and composition. I found them meaningful yet totally enigmatic. They are the works that most inspired the beginning of my journey with de Chirico's visual mysteries. I wanted greater insight in his and my own enigmas

The Mysterious Bathhouses (fig.44) is dominated on first sight by enormous, curling forms, arching and stretching neatly across the entire, shadowed foreground (fig. 44). Some of these forms overlap, while some mirror each other, there is even one perched on the diving board of the pool. Or is it actually a pool, given that the water is represented as jagged lines drawn across the surface?
The Bathhouse image was painted when de Chirico was eighty years old. On the surface at least, it appears an incomprehensible image, while also suggesting a consoling serenity, at odds with the enigmatic effect. The enigma lies in the fact that the curling forms make no sense in the painting. The historian Colin St. John Wilson argues that de Chirico can never be made to fit a comprehensible framework.

What is evidently amiss in the nonsense world of Nietzsche and de Chirico is any sense of the proper relationship between things. Since ‘nothing is true’ no thing can have its own truth or be enlarged by being brought into true relationship with another thing. Nor can anything serve a proper use.174

Yet is de Chirico’s imagery completely senseless or can there be a metaphysical truth when seen from a Nietzschean perspective? The above remarks only reflect the surface illogicality of the images and to better accept the enigma of “things”, they need to be seen outside a perceptual unity, where poetic juxtapositioning serves a different criterion for the artist, one that makes even the most enigmatic image acceptable. Certainly, this allows for things to have a truth or a true relationship.

The large, gray curling forms in the foreground of the bathhouses have a long and recurrent history in de Chirico’s imagery. The icon first appeared as far back as Autumnal Meditation (1912) in the form of a shepherd’s crook where it is seen leaning against an arched walkway (fig. 45). This shepherd’s crook has been associated with Apollo. Willard Bohn has identified it from a number of sources. While the crook initially belonged to Apollo it has other connotations of which de Chirico was aware, one of these was that the crook can also be connected to Mercury (Hermes). “Apollo’s yearning for Hermes’ lyre was unquenchable and (Hermes) gave Apollo the lyre, and received for it Apollo’s herdsman’s crook and herdsman’s status.”175 Although Bohn does not acknowledge it, the use of both Apollo and Hermes shows the shepherd’s crook as a dual reference, and one certainly consistent with de Chirico’s identification with dualities.

De Chirico used this mythological symbol throughout the paintings. The shepherd’s crook can be seen in numerous forms, particularly in the scaffolding of the mannequins. It is visible in The Two Masks (fig. 31) or it can be seen in the metaphysical interiors and landscapes like Mysterious Bathhouses - Flight to Sea (fig. 46). We can therefore assume that the use of it points to an evolving Apollonian symbol.

In *The Mysterious Bathhouses* (fig. 44) two identical temples stand in contrast, one shadowed in the foreground, one in the sunlit distance. The darkened temple shows a curtained enclosure and the drawn curtain indicates an interpretative, poetic state in progress. In *The Enigma of the Autumn Aftemoon* and *Autumn Meditation* Apollo's presence symbolically dominated the content. In *The Mysterious Bathhouses* (fig. 44) the setting has not been altered dramatically, and the tell-tale signs of dualities and contrasts are still evident, but in this and similar paintings the statue of Dante-Apollo is no longer present. In the Bathhouse images we can only see the writhing forms that have come to symbolize Apollo, dwarfing all other activities. The shepherd's crooks have metamorphosed into free-standing Apollonian forms, dream allusionary sculpture which contradict any visual logic. They appear to have a sense of yearning. In contrast to the diminutive human figures scattered throughout the painting, the sculptural objects actively dominate the image projecting a strong sense of identity; they are temporary permanence made visible.

There are a variety of clues in *The Mysterious Bathhouses* (fig. 44) that show that the artist has returned to the oracular temple of Apollo. In an early painting *The Enigma of the Oracle* we saw this temple and the soothsayer, in the curtained enclosure, high on the mountain, in his temple (fig. 7). This enclosure has been used in numerous paintings by de Chirico and it represents an Apollonian, soothsaying activity. There are curtained buildings in the bathhouse painting that are typical of the early de Chirico temples in *The Enigma of the Autumn Aftemoon* (fig. 6) painting

*The Return of Ulysses* (fig. 47) is a late work and shows a figure rowing a small boat on a stormy pond in the middle of a sitting room. The conventional decor of the room is accentuated by showing a wardrobe, a familiar armchair and a recognizable setting. The two seemingly unlikely elements, a boat on a sea in the middle of a domestic room, highlight the conventional content. The two chairs are in direct contrast to one another, and are almost as familiar as his mannequins or any other figures seen in de Chirico's paintings (fig. 50). De Chirico had what be called "a metaphysical view of furniture". It is illustrated in the way he anthropomorphized chairs and in *Ulysses* they operate like sentinel, observant figures. The red armchair in the corner has an almost fleshy identity and it is seen widely across his work, as early as 1927 in *The Furniture in the Valley* (fig. 49). The chair is also in *Sun on the Easel* (1972) standing as a character on a stage (fig. 50). Yet whether these are recognized as figurative presence, they suggest also a sense of immortality, for de Chirico viewed chairs as capable of retaining memories, and as therefore having a sense of the eternal. These chairs are

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able to represent on one hand a personal, everyday piece of furniture and on the other to imply all the aesthetic problems of figurative representation. The chair typifies the complexities of de Chirico’s visual enigmas. He was able to construct an aesthetic logic out of eliminating man, and in the enigmatic contradiction of his imagery de Chirico’s philosophical perspective was combined with his aesthetic goal. De Chirico wanted to show “the acute anguish hidden within (furniture), envelopes containing all sorts of things including the dreams of whoever might be occupying the room.”

The furniture’s role highlights the enigmatic nature of appearance and how it is not simple or able to be easily known. The dislocation between mythical and present time in the painting is a central device of the artist’s quest for a metaphysical sensation, while retaining his own “indecipherable enigma”.

In *Ulysses* the window looking out of the room is directly opposite a de Chirico painting on the wall and by the way they are positioned we see life contrasted with art. Given that there is no pictorial logic to the Ulysses image, why does it make so much visual sense, why is it so acceptable, so convincing? The answer lies in de Chirico’s solutions to the problems of representation and reality. He modernizes the Ulysses myth and in this employs not only the Nietzschean unity of truth and appearance, but illustrates the deeper problems of the endless Dionysian cycle. On first seeing this work, Wieland Schmied was not sure of why it fascinated him.

The big surprise of the evening, however, was still to come. One floor above the salon was the studio. Here I saw for the first time those ‘neo-Metaphysical’ paintings that he had started to paint in the ’60s - free, often bizarre and thought-provoking variation of the earlier imagery, with many new themes. These, too, had a strange effect on me initially - until I realized how they began to fascinate me more and more strongly on each further visit. I shall never forget *The Return of Ulysses* which I saw there, standing on the easel.

*The Return of Ulysses* shows the artist’s integration of his persistent themes. It shows his understanding of mythology, his ability to automythologize as well as reflect his awareness of the circular, fatal nature of time. It is a model of de Chirico’s aesthetic interests, showing the conflict between the internal Apollonian and the external Dionysian setting (no less than a lake in a room which seems to question even physics). The inherent skepticism within the image climaxes in the evocative title, it seems to be

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179 W. Schmied, *Unity and Variety*, op. cit., p. 15.
a provocation of longing. There is no system in the representation, because the driving principle within the work is not its narrative logic but a questioning of reality, as well as meaning, philosophical truth and aesthetic truth.

The motifs used in *The Return of Ulysses* are an almost direct compositional inversion of those in *The Mysterious Bathhouses* (fig 44). The key lies in the representation of water. In the Bathhouse painting the channel of Dionysian water meanders through the landscape and is contrasted with the Apollonian forms sitting in the foreground. The formless stream, flowing across the sunny background, works in contrast to the dark, shadowed foreground and illustrates the relentless struggle of the two aesthetic forces of Apollo and Dionysos, it shows the disjunction in the face of the failure of a unity.

In its place [Dionysos] generates feelings of indeterminate formlessness and of the oneness of the universe . . . Here individual life forms are felt to belong to the eternal stream of nature, that is the undercurrent that eternally flows underneath temporary appearances.\(^{180}\)

*The Return of Ulysses* shows a modern room that is like an internal island, in the centre of which is a body of water exemplifying fluidity and indeterminedness which are Dionysos’s specific qualities. The snake-like weaving of water through the landscape that was apparent in the Bathhouse paintings is not in Ulysses. It does not have the sense of the undercurrent eternally flowing underneath appearance, instead Ulysses sits in the boat, confident of being above the waves. The image projects both a sense of voyaging and hope, as well as the promise of returning home. The surface illogicality of the image has less to do with de Chirico’s so-called impenetrable images and more to do with the difficulty of accepting his illusions about reality. De Chirico’s representation of Ulysses can be seen to represent a state of inherent contradictoriness central to a Nietzschean perspective, which Eric Heller describes well.

Nietzsche said this plebeian zeal for logic is the worst offense against the fullness of life; for it is its plenitude of contradictions that nurture the sense of tragedy.\(^{181}\)

*The Return of Ulysses* is a realization of the Nietzschean values that encapsulate the contradiction between art and life. Having abandoned the zeal for logic de Chirico has used another visual schema to illuminate man’s life and tragedy. This is the

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integration of symbols of mythology as well as the personal symbols, like furniture, producing an image that seems to confound logical interpretation, due to the “plenitude of contradictions”.

These late works crystallize the artist’s enigmatic vision and connect it to more eternal, enduring concepts, ones that could encompass his deep interest in classicism. Numerous commentators on the artist’s work have recognized his poetic titles, having seen them as not only cues but as interdependent with the content. The American poet Micheal Heller came to the work initially due to the title.

I must admit that it was the painting’s title which first struck me because it seemed, in the moment, to echo the thoughts and confusions I was having. It was not only the permissive and transgressive title, The Uncertainty of The Poet, but something itself in the work which seemed to empower me to speak, at least to myself, about poetry. 182

As a title, The Return of Ulysses, is a poetic enticement and combined with the content, making an enigmatic space that has a creative role; in Micheal Heller’s words “the space is a solicitation.” 183 Ulysses’ mythological identity was that of an endless traveler and so this painting’s name infuses the image with a seeming contradiction. For we see Ulysses both departing and yet having returned. Between the title and the image these two ideas converge; by seeing Ulysses rowing away on another voyage, we must also accept him simultaneously returning to his home. In the contradiction of this stationary voyage we have a Nietzschean and, ultimately, the artist’s view of creativity.

A common method of creating visual ambiguity in de Chirico’s work is the combination of modernity and antique mythology and it is the characteristic most easily dismissed as an adopted trope, one that is used only to increase the enigmatic effect or indecipherable quality. Yet in Ulysses the contradiction of these elements highlight de Chirico’s various aesthetic states and these states produce the enigmatic quality and sense of the eternal his work is most noted for. It has frequently been described as a seeming randomness, a kind of constructed oddness, as if to confuse the viewer and intensify the sense of enigma. This view has often been supported, because the artist’s incongruous content and potent symbols have been accepted as largely impenetrable.

While the enigma of The Mysterious Bathhouses (fig.44) and The Return of Ulysses appears as if nothing can have a true relationship, in fact the multiplicity of

183 ibid., p. 12.
meanings can be genuinely accommodated in Nietzschean terms. De Chirico’s images may question visible truth, but paradoxically the result does not produce meaninglessness or an impenetrable enigma; in fact the contrary is true. In responding to the painting’s symbolism the viewer has access to a state of unknowing that is at the core of this enigmatic imagery, and produces a symbolic interconnectedness. De Chirico claimed his creative motivation to be striving toward something he did not know and it is therefore axiomatic that his artistic ideas would be open to change and experimentation. This position is consistent with the Nietzschean perspective of becoming and can be seen as the space from which de Chirico’s work emerges. In this sense, Ulysses creates a sensation of discovery and the critical dismay at de Chirico’s shifting visual representations fails to acknowledge all the stated goals. The uniqueness and indecipherable quality attributed to the paintings, even by his harshest critics must recognize that by their nature, they are irreducible knowledge.

Over the many years that my own enigmatic vision developed I came to use specific concepts repeatedly. So my investigation of de Chirico’s process and content gave me further insight into the common themes of enigma. In de Chirico I recognized qualities that I had been exploring and I increased my awareness of their significance. I have always used titles to my paintings that would operate as poetic accompaniments to the image. I felt the importance of balancing the content of the work with a metaphysical title, as an associated perspective. When I came to examine de Chirico, I recognized the significance of his titles and how he framed the deeper significance of his paintings by this method.

I was aware that titles like The Return of Ulysses where able to produce another layer of response, on top of the visual one. As the viewer, we cannot help questioning a painting that shows a figure rowing (home) in his lounge room while recognizing that he is continuing to voyage endlessly, as we know Ulysses did. Yet the painting also tells us it is called among other things a return.

This device echoed my intention in many of my works, in relation to the use of titling. In paintings like Marriage or The Dioscuri I wanted to expand the possible interpretations by choosing titles that gave a further dimension to their content.

In The Dioscuri I wanted to evoke The Unity of the Apollonian/Dionysian but I also wanted to emphasis the failure of that unity. This painting in particular is dependent on my own use of myth. Yet it is also my play on the enigmatic within this myth. Rather than reduce these works by deconstructing the titles in a narrative sense I will as my reader to respond to a series of questions endemic to the image.
In Marriage, what do rings suggest within the marriage ritual? Is she a performer? Is she on a stage? Are these hoops falling or being kept in motion? Is her vision obscured or does she only need internal sight? The asking of these questions produces the enigmatic interpretations possible within a work that is open to a state of becoming.
In my work there are no stages, no transitions from one style to another, as has sometimes been maintained. I have always painted in that way which gave me pleasure... that kind of painting which our modernists call baroque in the defamatory sense of the word or, worse still, baroque-like ornamentation... What does that mean? All painting since the medieval masters is baroque. One cannot paint like Giotto any more. Anyone who tries just wants to furnish himself with a style. Perhaps he cannot do anything else. In my painting, by contrast, there is an intensification of quality. I continually try, in a qualitative sense, to make them better... It is irrelevant to distinguish a de Chirico of yesterday from one of today. There are neither good nor bad de Chirico's. Metaphysical painting is of the spirit, it is an invention, while the realistic is an art of quality, which demands extraordinary intelligence. Painterly intelligence is of a special kind. I mean that a person can be intelligent without understanding a thing about painting. The reverse is also true. Luckily I have the gift of both sorts of intelligence, the metaphysical, which means the one for imagination and poetry, and the other, for quality. With that the imagination comes into play again. Realistic means this: that the theme of the picture is tied to reality.

G. de Chirico in *Late de Chirico - 1940-1976* by Rupert Martin.

The aim of this research was to provide a philosophical reflection of my paintings, using metaphysical painting and specifically Giorgio de Chirico as a model. Although critically de Chirico's imagery is considered largely impenetrable, in this research I have argued that when de Chirico's paintings are interpreted from the space of unknowing provided from within a Nietzschean philosophical context, an illumination of the enigmatic is possible. As I have been influenced by Nietzsche, as well as by de Chirico's use of Nietzschean themes, it was valuable for me to examine the background, sources and connections to these ideas. It is to this end that I pursued an understanding of Giorgio de Chirico and subsequently his connections to Nietzsche, specifically his ideas on the innocence of becoming and perspectivism. In pursuing the project this way I gained a greater understanding of the field of enigmatic painting while simultaneously deepening my own references and development.

Rather than arguing that de Chirico was influenced by Nietzsche, I viewed the philosophical and poetic expression of creativity within Nietzsche's ideas as manifest in
de Chirico's art. De Chirico's paintings showed that the ideas of The Birth of Tragedy, particularly in the Apollonian-Dionysian relationship, could be interpreted to show not only their symbolic form but also their inherent rupture. These images combined the aesthetic principles of Apollo and Dionysos with the haunting quality of de Chirico's enigmatic imagery.

In my own imagery I wanted to emphasize the nature of the Apollonian and Dionysian respectively. In works like The Sanitarium or The Mysterious Union I dwelt on the Dionysian or what I saw as the restless undercurrent beneath all appearance. By presenting obscured figures, in a sense figures unformed or partly unseen, I wanted to accent a fundamental Dionysian quality, the "dissolution of ground and determinedness" that is a key to enigmatic painting. In these works I obscured or dissolved the figure in such a way that it was unrecognizable. These figures could not be reduced to a likeness or a portrait. I wanted my figures to be vehicles for becoming, the state so well described by Nietzsche. They emerge from behind their hermetic curtain, yet retain their enigmatic presence, they stay in the Dionysian realm. Nietzsche's ideas of becoming are connected deeply to the idea of the Dionysian wholeness, for it is an idea that recognized the fluidity and illusionary nature of all things. As such I wanted a figurative presence that acknowledged this ceaseless changing. I was inspired by this philosophical position and I used it to create my figurative presence, as I regard none of these figures as fixed or measurable but only as symbols of a state of "becoming".

A convincing element and one I gained considerable insight from was the way de Chirico tackled the problem of figuration and, in this sense, the problem of reality. De Chirico's use of Nietzsche's hypothesis, where external phenomena represents Apollonian form-giving illusion, contrasted by the threatening Dionysian, gave me greater awareness of the stillness, silence and foreboding possible within my own work.

From de Chirico's earliest interpretation of statuary, there are indications of the suggestive nature and symbolic force of his figurative representations. In the Ariadne works it is clear that the representation of the statue does not necessarily stand for the symbolic reality. It is also clear from the symbolic clues in the allusions to figuration that for the artist these statues were linked to the Nietzschean theme of a creative unity/disunity.

184 Nietzsche, Tragedy, p. 25.
185 Refer to innocence of becoming on p. 3.
The historian Rainbow-Vigourt claims that the artist identified himself with the Ariadne statues in his paintings. "De Chirico was presenting a self-portrait of some sort: that of a man aware only of the similarity between Ariadne and himself as both abandoned, asleep, alone, but about to be raised by the god Dionysos."\textsuperscript{186} Rainbow-Vigourt's analysis crystallizes a significant element in all de Chirico's figurative representations; the way he merges his identity with the imagery. Although I have no interest in the use of mythical identities in my own imagery, such as Ariadne, I have found parallels in the use of partly formed figures in my work. In this device I see the possibilities of evolving identities in figuration and visual ideas; those not reliant on portraiture.

Another treatment of my figuration was shaped by the Apollonian themes of form-giving illusion. In works such as The Poem, The Illusion and The Eternal Turin I incorporated a sense of stillness and statuary to the mood of the painting. I found during my research that my use of the figure had strong connections to de Chirico's use of mythical statuary. While I have no interest in personalizing antique statuary in my imagery and do not see it as part of my artistic experience, I recognized the overlapping characteristic of using figures that were not alive or real. I genuinely wanted to create figures that were not fixed identities, but in Nietzsche's terms, a "piece of fate".\textsuperscript{187}

De Chirico's figuration is developed in the symbols of Italian unification and the iconography of antique statuary. He integrates characters that not only exist in history and myth but by fusing them with the classical and historical world they are transformed into Nietzschean symbols. The figures borrowed from the Risorgimento are another way in which the artist symbolically employs the Apollonian-Dionysian unity. This is exemplified in the unusual character of de Chirico's painting The Child's Brain, for it shows the suggestive and allusive nature of the artist's fusion of the god, the remembered father and a stale political past. There have been many attempts at interpreting The Child's Brain, for the work is supreme in showing the complex and disturbing elements of de Chirico's enigmatic imagery. The covert sexual identity of the central figure is often seen as the most mysterious ingredient of the painting. Although a number of de Chirico scholars see the figure as the father, this dreaming, transcendent figure is ultimately de Chirico's full realization of the Dionysian primal oneness, a primal oneness which according to Nietzsche is destroyed by consciousness, but perhaps able to be apprehended in visual form. I regard the figure in The Child's

\textsuperscript{186} Rainbow-Vigourt, G. de Chirico, op. cit., p. 323.
\textsuperscript{187} Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols, op. cit., p. 54.
Brain as a clear example to me of the possibility of a different kind of figuration, for it transcends the reality of portraiture and presents a figure of such symbolic force that no clear recognition of identity is possible. Yet the lack of recognition is at the core of the paintings value for it introduces the viewer to the unknown and the becoming.

De Chirico’s use of this Nietzschean view is evident in his sleeping and transcendent figures in which art is the dream. “The beautiful illusion of the dream worlds, in the creation of which every man is a consummate artist, is the precondition of all visual art, and indeed, as we shall see, of an important amount of poetry. We take pleasure in the immediate apprehension of form, all shapes speak to us, and nothing is indifferent or unnecessary. But even when this dream reality is presented to us with the greatest intensity, we still have glimmering awareness that it is an illusion.”

In fact dreaming may be evidence of art being lived, and lived in a state close to Nietzsche’s becoming. The images of Ariadne and Mercury stimulate a sense of the dream vision, so de Chirico’s many dream-images act like creative states of becoming, made possible by a transcendent vision.

In many of de Chirico paintings, the often-commented sense of dread or foreboding can be directly related to the inclusion of the Dionysian. This dread can be sensed in the piazzas of Ariadne or the shadowed scenes of Turin, and it becomes clear that de Chirico created this mood to show the underlying content.

In this respect it is possible to see why de Chirico claimed his inspiration arose from the poetic nature of Nietzsche’s ideas. By using Nietzsche’s questioning of reality and illusion in attempting to conceptualize the visually enigmatic, de Chirico incorporated his poetic insight into the images as the springboard for his vision. De Chirico’s aesthetic questionings are evident in his writings, for he recognizes the way these ingredients can trigger a creative outpouring.

The term de Chirico gave to this state was “poetic insight” or “revelation” and this process can certainly be understood as part of his artistic method.

The consistently accepted view of de Chirico’s entire œuvre is of the unquestionable worth of the early work, while the later work is viewed as unimaginative and evidence of his decline and artistic failure. While this issue is not central to the main research argument, I consider this view to be another indication of how poorly

188 Nietzsche, Tragedy, op. cit., p. 15.
recognized de Chirico's sources are. For it fails to contextualize de Chirico's own claims or see them as a valuable point of orientation in evaluating the continuity of his development and aesthetic interests. It is also difficult to discuss de Chirico's entire oeuvre without touching on these contradictions, for he is so often seen as having a fractured career, one without consistent thematic concerns. The Italian scholar Pier Luigi Senna describes the contradiction well.

De Chirico loved enigma, painted enigmas, was himself an enigma. As an artist and even more so as a man. What perplexes us most about the artist is his caustic and persistent anti-modernism, though he was himself one of the original and inventive painters of the twentieth century."

The recent willingness to reconsider de Chirico's later work certainly shows a more integrated view of the artist, for it did open up the debate and give greater breadth to the discussion of the artist's work, but it is equally important to stress the origins of the work, their source and role in producing an enigmatic viewpoint.

De Chirico's work has many characteristics of postmodernity: the making of numerous replicas of earlier paintings, obvious quotations of earlier historical periods and, in some of the images, the use of a seeming pastiche of his earlier works. It becomes evident why a postmodern interpretation of the artist's work and career appeared as a powerful antidote in the 1980s to the previous historical positioning and how with hindsight de Chirico gives the impression of being a forerunner to a postmodern ethic.

Nevertheless, it is also important to recognize that de Chirico's work does not fit comfortably within the social or political agendas of a postmodern framework, and in fact the imagery is referential to the central concerns of the western canon.

Stephen Bann acknowledges this problem of interpreting an artist like de Chirico and the ambiguous stylistic categorization that accompany the discussion.

If de Chirico anticipates, in many significant ways, the position of many artists in a supposedly postmodern era, this is not because he teaches that the elements of pictorial tradition can be manipulated with complete liberty, but precisely the opposite. He dramatizes for our benefit, the psychological strategies that are necessary for

189 "Cantankerous, argumentative and gloomy, with a sense of the grotesque and a keen and sarcastic sense of humour, he chose to be a solitary person all his life," Pier Luigi Senna, "L'opera grafica di De Chirico (De Chirico's graphic works)." Print Collector 45 (1980), p. 2.
being an artist within the constraining and heterogeneous system of the Western tradition.\textsuperscript{180}

I have raised these issues because they consider a fresh view and impetus for de Chirico’s work, although this research shows that categorizing him as post-modern is more convenient, than appropriate. Few appraisals of the later work give it attention in terms of a development from the early work, and while this topic is not central to my research concerns (and would require another thesis again) I refer to the subject only to highlight the difficulty of identifying the nature of de Chirico’s enigmas.

Inclusion of de Chirico’s work within a contemporary framework has not altered many commentators’ views in respect of the artist’s reworking earlier themes or making replicas, generally seeing this act as a sign of psychological and aesthetic collapse. My own view of de Chirico’s replicas is that it was another sign that the evolution of his image-making questioned his sense of knowing and was consistent with all his investigations.\textsuperscript{191}

De Chirico’s aesthetic method managed to cohesively fuse historical paradigms with contemporary themes to produce paintings that projected, as well as represented, a modernist sense of disquiet and emotional absence. These enigmatic sensations were the vehicle of his imagery, their message was a sense of becoming. The poetic and memorable nature of the imagery inevitably asks us to consider Nietzsche’s “perspectival character of existence”.\textsuperscript{192}

The imagery’s symbolism revealed the artist’s concerns and, as we have seen, these necessarily had to include an inherent contradictoryness, an enigma.

The outcomes of having explored these themes, my research practice, the making of my art and the perceived relationship between de Chirico’s paintings and Nietzschean perspectivism has been to realize the intuitive nature of enigmatic imagery, yet be able to bring this force into play as a creative practice. This was made possible by my exploration of these themes and by the testing of their origins.

\textsuperscript{180} Stephen Bann, “Did the Greeks Believe in their Myths?”, \textit{Arts Magazine} 65, December, 1990, p. 79.

\textsuperscript{191} An extensive discussion of de Chirico’s making of replicas and my own artistic view of this process would take this research topic in another direction altogether, as the subject takes in all the complexities and possibilities made available within postmodernity. For this reason I have stayed within the nominated research topic.

\textsuperscript{192} Nietzsche, \textit{The Gay Science}, op. cit., p. 69.
When making my own imagery I was able to identify many of the aesthetic qualities I had previously little insight into. The investigation of various characteristics of my work began before this research and was formed throughout the making of the paintings and was part of a larger experience of what visual enigma could be for me, how it could be acknowledged and illuminated. The possibility of responding to the moment, recognizing the unspeakable communication in certain creative moment, these all consequently produced a discourse that honoured and expanded the expression of my images. In considering both Nietzsche’s philosophical themes of “becoming” and the creative disunity I was able to strengthen my intuitive use of dualities; curtains that gave way to a sense of the revelatory moment; enduring symbolic icons like horses and books as well as the visual nature of the revelatory vision. My numerous works that employed figures with closed eyes where a feature that began many years ago, throughout this research I came to recognize the significance of this visual sign. My research highlighted the presentment in my own choices and then deepened my understanding of their origins, in some cases classical origins. These various ingredients have enabled the so-called meaning of my work to be accessed by the viewer from with the construction of a philosophical context.

In my view my thesis is contained in my paintings. This exegesis was designed to explain the aesthetic and philosophical contexts from which my work evolved. My paintings partake in de Chirico’s metaphysical vision and representation of enigma. I believe that mere formalist analysis of paintings do not contribute to tapping the “meaning” of a work which ultimately is not reducible to words but instead contained within visual imagery. Nevertheless I do believe that in outlining the coalescence of Nietzschean thought, de Chirico’s aesthetic and philosophical vision (which is also Nietzschean) and my own enigmatic vision will contribute to a means of accessing “meaning” in my work.

My paintings have an intellectual and aesthetic rapport with Nietzsche and de Chirico. This exegesis in focusing on the conjunction of politics, psychology and history recast in the framework of “perspectivism” and “the innocence of becoming”, endemic to the world-views of de Chirico and Nietzsche, locates and explicates my work. I have provided, in my analysis of these artists the context from which my work has evolved and will continue to move in a process of “becoming”.
Appendix A

Giorgio de Chirico, 1888-1978

Giorgio de Chirico remains a pivotal figure in art, yet opinions are divided about the relationship that exists between his early, well-received work and the subsequent more unpopular images. History has largely viewed him as a figure that created remarkable, influential work, yet the later part of his life is viewed an artistic failure.\textsuperscript{193} There are numerous interpretations for why de Chirico's "genius died a lingering death"\textsuperscript{194} yet few commentators draw on the events of his life. Discussions of the artist's work generally encompass the unusual circumstances of his early history, although treating the specifics of his life solely as source material for associated iconography within the paintings. The following is an outline of Chirico's artistic life and work and its relationship to Nietzschean themes.

1888-1905

Giorgio de Chirico was born of Italian parents in Greece on 10 July 1888 in Volos, a Thessalian port said to be the point of departure for the Argonauts in search of the Golden Fleece. De Chirico's younger brother, Andrea, was born in 1891, the year his older sister died. The brothers called themselves the Dioscuri, mythical figures who were characterized by their devotion to each other, which has been a common description applied to the de Chirico brothers.\textsuperscript{195}

\textsuperscript{193} Elizabeth Frank, "Archetypes and Anxiety Dreams", \textit{Artnews}, September, 1982, p. 103.
\textsuperscript{194} ibid.
\textsuperscript{195} "The Dioscuri, who were never separated from one another in any adventure, became the pride of Sparta. Castor was famous as a soldier and tamer of horses, Polydeuces as the best boxer of his day; both were devoted to each other. Poseidon made Castor and Polydeuces the saviors of shipwrecked sailors, and granted them power to send favourable winds in response to a sacrifice of white lambs. The Dioscuri fought with the Spartan fleet at Aegospotamoi and the victors afterwards hung up two golden stars in their honour at Delphi... The Spartans represent the Dioscuri by two parallel wooden beams, joined by two transverse ones... According to those who have seen the Dioscuri, the only noticeable difference between them is that Polydeuces's face bears the scars of boxing. They dress alike: each has his half egg-shell surmounted by a star, each his spear and white horse. Some say that Poseidon gave them their horses; other, that Polydeuces's Thessalian charger was a gift from Hermes." Robert Graves, \textit{The Greek Myths: I & II}, trans. Robert Graves, 22nd ed., London, Penguin, 1985, 2 vols., p. 246 & pp. 248-9, Vol. I.
The love between them was more than brotherly: "The relationship was almost carnal and infinitely deep" observed Nino Frankl, a friend of both, who was secretary to the publisher Bontempelli during the family's second extended stay in Paris. Andrea de Chirico was referred to here by his subsequent professional name, Alberto Savinio.

De Chirico considered it significant to have been born in the year that Nietzsche metaphorically died (Nietzsche completely lost his reason in January, 1889, in Turin). The de Chirico family were in Greece because of Evaristo de Chirico being employed as a railway engineer by the Thessalian government.

Most studies of de Chirico focus upon the significant use he makes of trains in his images and see this iconography as symbolizing his father. While it would be hard to challenge this entrenched and generally-held view, in this study I propose that the compositional use of the train in his early work also coincides with the ways sails of boats have been used in earlier images such as, The Enigma of the Arrival and the Afternoon or The Afternoon of Ariadne, which shows both train steam and sails billowing at the same spatial distance in the image.

Given de Chirico's persistent reference to himself and his brother as the Dioscuri and that one of their powers was to save shipwrecked sailors by summoning up favorable winds, it is possible the artist substituted the ship symbol of the twins with a twentieth century icon of travel.

De Chirico received drawing lessons when he was eight from a Greek architect named Mavrudis who was also a railroad employee. The frequency of technical drawing instruments in the paintings, beginning in 1915 and continuing until 1972, is also seen as representing de Chirico's father and his engineering equipment.

Given de Chirico's stated regard for his drawing teacher, the visual use of these instruments could also refer to Mavrudis and show a desire to emulate and immortalize the work of another artist, old or modern, in whose work childhood memories of a parent's occupation play so central a part. Trains are a recurrent iconographical element in the de Chirico paintings known collectively as the Italian squares." Soby, de Chirico, op. cit., p. 13.

Two of de Chirico's earliest paintings, Autumn Meditation (1910/11), and Morning Meditation, 1911, both have a view of the sea, instead of his usual wall and train, and
a figure who occupies a significant place in his memoirs. Mavrudis belongs to the artist's own Greek history, not only as a teacher of drawing, but as a connection to his expressed pursuit of classicism.

In 1900 Evaristo de Chirico organized for Giorgio to attend the Polytechnic Institute of Athens, as well as evening classes of life drawing. These experiences seemed to reinforce Giorgio's regard for the value of drawing, not only from life, but from casts and statues which remained a permanent component of his artistic life.

1905-1910

In 1905 de Chirico's father died and the family left Athens, traveled through Turin, Venice and on to Munich, where Alberto Savinio studied music and Giorgio enrolled in the Munich Academy of Fine Art. While Savinio studied under Max Reger, Giorgio attended the Academy with little enthusiasm, leading a "colourless and boring existence".

After two years in Munich and some time in Milan, de Chirico, aged nineteen, moved to Florence with his mother and brother. During this time the artist experienced physical and emotional depression and "did very little work. I did more reading than painting. Above all I read books of philosophy and was overcome with severe crises of black melancholy."

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190 "When I found myself in the presence of Mavrudis I looked at him, and as I looked I wandered into a world of dreams and fantasy. I thought that this man could draw everything, even from memory, even in the dark, even without looking; that he could draw the clouds fleeing over the sky . . . I thought everything could be portrayed by this man's magic pencil. As I looked at him I imagined that I was him; yes, I would have liked to be this man then, I would have liked to be the artist Mavrudis." G. de Chirico, Memoirs, op. cit., p. 19

200 "Our masters, first and foremost, used to teach us drawing; drawing the divine art, the basis of every plastic construction, the skeleton of every good work, the eternal law that every craftsman should follow." G. de Chirico in "Selected Texts", Late de Chirico, op. cit., p. 51.

201 "Yes, gentle man to the statues; to the statues to learn in all its nobility the doctrine of drawing." G. de Chirico in Late de Chirico, op. cit., p. 51.

202 "Eberhard Hanfstaengl, Director of the Bavarian Art Museums in Munich, forwarded the sad information that all records of the Munich Academy, where de Chirico was trained as an artist, were destroyed by fire during the recent war." Soby, G. de Chirico, op. cit., p. 8.


204 Ibid. p. 61.
He had begun reading German philosophy when he was at the Munich Academy, specifically Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, and maintained his enthusiasm for these philosophers, along with Otto Weininger and his ideas on the metaphysics of geometry.  

This was the period when the influences from the Swiss/German painter, Arnold Böcklin ended. For in the Italian piazzas series de Chirico “had begun to paint subjects in which [he] tried to express the strong and mysterious feeling [he] had discovered in the books of Nietzsche: the melancholy of beautiful autumn days, afternoons in Italian cities.”

Due to de Chirico’s frequent change of residence and country, along with a need to sell or trade what work he did have from these years, there exist only a few of these early works. Those available show the compositional approach that would subsequently define de Chirico’s style and the metaphysical style he became renowned for. They embody most of the iconography of all the subsequent piazza images.

**1911-1914 – Paris**

Alberto Savinio, already in Paris, encouraged his brother to join him, in what was regarded as a city of artistic revolt. Giorgio and his mother arrived in Paris, via Turin, although de Chirico was still suffering ill health. While still in Florence, de Chirico experienced a revelation that he directly connected to ways of creating imagery.

The oft-mentioned “metaphysical experience” in the Piazza Santa Croce, an experience generally believed to mark the abandonment of the symbolism inspired by Böcklin and the adoption of the approach that was to be developed in his metaphysical phase. This crucial revelation occurred one afternoon when de Chirico, his attention wondering freely in contemplation, watched the evening drawn in over the beautiful and, at that time, still lonely Florentine square. He had the sensation of a crystalline clarity of perception which allowed him to see into the heart of things. The act of contemplation of the objects themselves invaded his whole consciousness.

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203 Soby, *de Chirico*, op. cit., p. 29.
204 “Whereas Böcklin had evolved an essentially Germanic kind of painting from an Italianate vision, de Chirico was presently to create a thoroughly Italian art from a German metaphysical premise,” ibid., p. 16.
Upon recovering his health, he began painting again, taking up “the thread of inspiration which I drew from Nietzsche.”

De Chirico exhibited three works in the 1912 Salon d'Automne with the support of Pierre Laprade, Enigma of the Oracle, Enigma of the Autumn Afternoon, and a Self-Portrait. The first work was inspired by the “exceptional poetry” he had discovered “in the books of Nietzsche”, while the second work “contained the lyrical quality of Greek prehistory.”

On the advice of Guillaume Apollinaire, who conducted a Sunday salon, de Chirico successfully exhibited works in the Salon des Indépendants (1913), showing four works. Soby suggests these three works were The Enigma of the Hour, The Melancholy of Departure and The Enigma of the Arrival of the Afternoon.

De Chirico himself complained that the favorable response to his paintings was due to a false understanding of their theatrical nature, rather than recognizing the “exceedingly solitary and profound lyricism of these paintings.”

1915-1918

After the declaration of World War I in Paris, de Chirico and his brother enlisted in the Italian Army and traveled to Florence, then Ferrara, where they were assigned to the 27th Infantry Regiment. Joining her sons, Gemma de Chirico took a flat in Ferrara where they all lived. After some initial training de Chirico began to paint again, stimulated by the “appearance of Ferrara, one of the most beautiful cities in Italy”, combined with his interest in the shops “where you could find certain sweets and biscuits with remarkably metaphysical and strange shapes.”

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209 G. de Chirico, Memoirs, op. cit., p. 64.
210 Ibid. (I deduced that the painter Pierre Laprade did not show the same interest in the metaphysics and mystery of dreams as someone like Pythagoras or Arthur Schopenhauer.)
211 Ibid.
212 Ibid. (Apollinaire lived at 202 bis Boulevard Saint-Germain and according to Soby owned three significant de Chirico paintings, including the portrait of Apollinaire, prefiguring the head wound the poet would receive in the war.)
214 Ibid. p. 80.
The visual influence of Ferrara can be seen in his paintings of this time. De Chirico used the surrounding architecture, particularly the Castello Estenze and the Palazzo Schifanoia.

Also, "to this period belong the so-called 'metaphysical interiors' which I then continued to paint, with some variations, and still paint now."  

Among Ferrara residents they befriended Carlo Cirelli, who with his embroideries and long fingernails became the subject of a de Chirico portrait. The de Chirico brothers also befriended the writer/painter Filippo de Pisis. Beginning in 1915, de Chirico began painting the unusual mannequin figures.

During 1916 de Chirico met Carlo Carrá at a military hospital where he was convalescing. Carrá was originally a member of the Futurist movement, but during his posting to Ferrara and his acquaintance with de Chirico he began painting a series of Pittura Metafisica works, “but with something of a struggle, [painting] the same subjects that I was doing, and all this with an effrontery and a sans gêne, that were truly astonishing." 

A dispute with Carrá ensued over the originator of metaphysical imagery and continued intermittently throughout de Chirico's career. It would seem that de Chirico is correct in claiming precedence, as his metaphysical work began prewar in Florence and Paris.  

De Chirico produced a considerable body of paintings during this year, having arranged with a military doctor to use a spare room in the hospital as a studio.

Before the war ended de Chirico contracted Spanish flu and was very ill in a military hospital. He convalesced at the house of Carlo Cirelli and upon his recovering, he returned to Rome, where he was stationed when the war ended.

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215 ibid.
216 ibid., p. 84.
217 ibid.
1918-1920

It was also at this time that he collaborated with Mario Broglio in the production of the Italian magazine *Valori Plastici*. De Chirico's *Pittura Metafisica* works were exhibited at the gallery of Anton Giulio Bragaglia, and regarded as "something of a flop" with these images reproduced in *Valori Plastici*. During 1918-19 in Rome, de Chirico completed four self-portraits.

It was also at this time in Rome that de Chirico began frequenting the museums and "it was one morning while in the Villa Borghese, in front of a painting by Titian, that (he) had a revelation of what great painting was."

While de Chirico’s memoir is oratory and in part argumentative in style, the following passage indicates the almost militant position he took about this revelation. Considering the shift of subject matter and concern with technique, it marks the point where de Chirico’s public pronouncements about the interpretation and content of his work altered the position he occupied as an artist.

I realized that something tremendous was happening within me. Until then, in the museums of Italy, France and Germany, I had looked at the paintings of the masters and I had always seen them as everyone saw them: as painted images. Naturally what happened to me in the Villa Borghese Museum was only a beginning. Afterwards, with study, work, observation and meditation, I made tremendous progress; in this way I now understand that painting is a phenomenon of such a kind that when others see it, those who do not yet know, those who are still in the dark, they wear themselves out in endless ways to save their faces, deceive others and also themselves. Since they do not succeed in any way they are unhappy, and being unhappy they do bad work.

Although this description only alludes to his views, it indicates a shift of values regarding the importance of technique. The core of this shift challenged the role that the avant garde assigned to traditional painting values, and since de Chirico had occupied a significant representative role with the avant garde, his championing of traditional painting methods was largely interpreted as retrograde.

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218 *La Ronda* and *Valori Plastici* were two important reviews in the artistic and literary history of their period. De Chirico contributed important articles to both and *Valori Plastici* published his essay on Courbet in 1925. ibid., p. 252.

219 ibid., p. 91.

220 ibid., p. 96.

This period showed de Chirico intermittently making copies of famous masters and investigating old methods of paintings, working with tempera and oil painting mediums. He was assisted in this research by the Russian restorer, Nicolai Locoff and Enrico Betterini. During this time in Rome he lived at the house of Dr. Giorgio Castelfranco, painting a number of portraits of him.

De Chirico participated in a number of important exhibitions and the previous decade’s paintings were growing significantly in reputation, particularly amongst the Surrealists, who began collecting the work seriously.

1921-1925

For de Chirico this is the period in which he more deeply explored his interest in classical technique while he became increasingly celebrated for his metaphysical imagery. De Chirico’s earlier work was included in exhibitions with the Surrealists and lauded as the precursor and embodiment of their ideas, particularly in relation to the use of images in dreams and the unconscious.

De Chirico used the magazine Valori Pasticci to amplify his views and encourage a return to tradition in painting. He wrote in considerable detail to André Breton in 1922 on his developments in painting. In the same year he exhibited at Paul Guillaume’s gallery, showing fifty-five works where a handful demonstrated his recent interests. Breton described the work as Surrealist, although de Chirico’s subsequent new work did not meet with critical favour.

In 1924 de Chirico met his first wife, Rassia Gurievich Krohl, a dancer in Teatrino degli Undici, a company established by Pirandello.

Owing to de Chirico’s reputation with the Surrealists, Paul Eluard and his wife Gala, subsequently Mme Salvador Dali, visited de Chirico in Rome, intending to buy a painting, preferably The Disquieting Muses, or The Sacred Fish, which at the time were respectively owned by Giorgio Castelfranco and Mario Broglio. Both owners

222 ibid., pp. 113-4.
declined to sell their works which resulted in de Chirico making a replica of *The Disquieting Muses.*

The subsequent controversy surrounding these issues and the implications of it are frequently cited as grounds, not only for the artist's questionable dating of paintings, but also for concern about his ethical integrity. Most significantly, they are seen as the strongest indicator of de Chirico's failing creativity, and as such are the critical benchmark for his decline.

His first wife Rassia, when interviewed, said when she questioned de Chirico about making replicas, he replied heatedly, "Why is that interesting? To have money? And the idea winds up Doucet and mocks the Surrealists". When Rassia questioned him about the morality of this behavior, "I am not a moralist, but a painter."

This debate has been a major determinant in the overall critical appraisal of de Chirico's creative worth and reputation. The subject, combined with the enigmatic content of the early work, became the core obstacle to a unified interpretation and understanding of the artist's work.

But for this period, de Chirico's relations with the French Surrealists and the avant garde were very strong and he was involved with most of their activities.

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224 On February 23, 1924, de Chirico wrote from Rome to Paul Eluard's wife as follows: "As soon as I received your amiable letter I wrote to my friend in Florence, M. Castelfranco, the owner of *The Disquieting Muses*, urging him to let you have the picture at the price of 1,200 francs which you propose. He might raise some objection because of the rate of exchange but be assured, Madam, that I will do everything possible so that you can have this painting at the price you propose."

On March 10, 1924, he again wrote Mme Eluard: "Here is the problem: my friend in Florence despite my urging, does not wish to sell *The Muses* for less than 3,500 Italian lire; as to The Sacred Fish, it belongs to M. Bruglione, who I believe wants 5,000 Italian lire for it. If you wish exact replicas of these two paintings I can make them for you for 1,000 Italian lire each. These replicas will have no other fault than that of being executed in a more beautiful medium and with a more knowledgeable technique. I hope, dear Madame, to have a reply soon. *The Muses* was ordered promptly and completed that same year (1924). So far as is known, the replica of The Sacred Fish was never made, certainly not for the Eulards at this date," ibid., p. 134.

In 1925 de Chirico and Rassia moved from Rome to Paris, initially participating in the Surrealist evenings at André Breton’s apartment, although subsequently breaking with the Surrealists.²²⁶

The beginning of this breach began with an exhibition de Chirico mounted at Rosenberg’s Gallerie de L’Effort Moderne. The Surrealists simultaneously mounted an alternative exhibition of his earlier work, at Gallerie Surréaliste, rue Jacques Callot.

The final break with the Surrealists came in 1926 with an oppositional article in Les Feuilles libres by Ribemont-Dessaignes and an article by Breton in Révolution Surréaliste, which printed a reproduction of Orestes y Electra, previously shown at Galleria Pésaro in Milan with lines drawn through it.²²⁷ In 1925 de Chirico published a monograph on Courbet in Valori Plastici.

1926-1930

During this time de Chirico received support from various figures; including a monograph by Roger Vitrac and an essay by Jean Cocteau called Le mystère laïc with de Chirico illustrating “the book with a few drawings.” De Chirico’s response was,

I am very grateful to Jean Cocteau for the interest he has shown in me, but I must say that I do not in fact approve the kind of praise he accords me and the interpretation he likes to put on my pictures . . . . I must unfortunately and most regretfully say this, because even many people who are favourably disposed towards me do not understand anything about my painting”.²²⁸

Other publications were by Waldemar, Ternovetz, Courtion and Breton who dismissed de Chirico’s post-1918 paintings.

This is a period of prolific writing and in 1929 de Chirico published his famous novel Hebdomeron,²²⁹ which was “acknowledged and saluted as the resurrection of de

²²⁶ The extensive, vituperative account of these events can be read in de Chirico’s memoirs, including his assessment of the Surrealist’s financial motivation for retaining the distinction of his early work and the lack of worth for the later paintings, e.g. “André Breton, therefore, was the classic type of pretentious ass and impotent arriviste.” G. de Chirico, Memoirs, op. cit., pp. 115 - 123.
Chirico’s genius, and his testament.²²³⁰ Aragon praised it in La Peinture au Défi (1930), and echoed by Eluard in Minotaure 10 (1937). We also know that the novel was among the favourite books of André Breton, Max Jacob, Jean Cocteau and Henri Miller.²²³¹

He also published a Small Treatise on the Technique of Painting. In 1929 Diaghilev invited de Chirico to collaborate on costumes and scenery for Le Bal by Jules Verne, with music by Rietti, staged at Monte Carlo. During this time Rassia studied archaeology at the Sorbonne in Paris.

1930-1940

Somewhere between 1930 and 1931 de Chirico met his second wife Isabella Far, née Pankiewicz, a Russian Jew living in Paris. He also made sixty-six lithographs illustrating Apollinaire’s Calligrammes (the origins of the electric sun iconography). During this time he painted many female nudes and still lifes, and experimented with various painting techniques.

He also completed two ballet sets, Bacchus and Ariadne by Roussel. In the early 1930s the de Chiricos lived mostly in Florence. During the mid-1930s he prepared lithographs for Jean Cocteau’s Mythologie, began the series of paintings entitled The Mysterious Bathhouses, traveled and lived in New York, where Isabella Far eventually joined him.

In America he exhibited at the Matisse Gallery (early work), and was a guest of Albert Barnes, while illustrating for a number of fashionable magazines, including Vogue magazine.²²³² In 1936 The Museum of Modern Art included his work in their exhibition Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism.

While in America his mother died. He left the USA in 1938 and lived mostly in Milan, traveling to London and Paris and regularly exhibiting throughout Europe, while completing many portrait commissions.

²²³¹ ibid., pp. 39-40.
1940-1960

De Chirico was allocated a room in the 1942 *Venice Biennale* and during the war years he lived in Rome and Florence. In 1945 he published *Memoirs of My Life*. The book presents and argues a different viewpoint from most of the historical events surrounding de Chirico’s career, including his involvement with the avant garde and the Surrealists.

Generally the book was reviewed unfavourably and was seen as another indication of the unreasonable views and distorted perception the artist held. The reviewer for *Art in America* found,

... for a picture of the man himself, angry and resentful, suspicious of the world at large, we have his autobiography ... But the mention of an “intellectual”, a critic, an art dealer or a successful contemporary artist was enough to shatter the image of the past and plunge him into a fit of name calling and ineffectual crowing.

This began a period of the artist’s career when there was claim and counter-claim in regard to forgeries and replicas. Highlighting these disputes was de Chirico’s response to the 1948 *Venice Biennale*, which he viewed as having “a totally negative purpose”. The *Exhibition of Metaphysical Paintings* at Venice showed only early work of de Chirico’s, which he considered tantamount to ‘turning him into a living corpse’. De Chirico also claimed that “in the group of Pittura Metafisica works attributed to me there was a fantastic fake.”

This was the period where he persistently resorted to legal avenues to address his objections to suspected fakes. The controversy produced a worsening of his reputation.

But it seems significant that at no point in the review did the painter question the authenticity of any of the seventy pictures reproduced, though this would have been the most damaging charge he could have made. I should add that since the recent war de Chirico, in conversations with reporters and friends, is said to have disclaimed two

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or sometimes three of the seventy early paintings. But one of these he has since authenticated in writing and his opinion of the others has varied according to his mood and audience.\footnote{237}

In 1949 De Chirico was made an honorary member of the \textit{Royal Society of British Artists} where he exhibited a wide selection of recent work, while in Milan he completed designs and commissions for various operas and ballets.

In 1952 the artist’s brother Alberto Savinio died of a heart condition.

In 1955 James Thrall Soby published a revised edition of his \textit{Early Chirico}, entitled \textit{Giorgio de Chirico}, along with an exhibition of his metaphysical work at \textit{The Museum of Modern Art}. During these years de Chirico exhibited paintings that reworked many of the earlier metaphysical themes, while he continued painting still-lifes, landscapes and portraits. He continued to attack modern art publicly and make accusations about false works attributed to him, while participating in television and magazine interviews.

\textbf{1960-1970}

The ‘neo-metaphysical’ paintings, as they were described by contemporary critics, show an increasing use of light and pastel colours which all combined to create a greater sense of playfulness. These works find favour with new critics. De Chirico was sued in 1968 in both Milan and Rome regarding his accusations about false work attributed to him.

\textbf{1970-1978}

There was a large retrospective exhibition of de Chirico’s work at the \textit{Palazzo Reale de Milan} and the \textit{Kestner-Gesellschaft}, Hannover, with an outline of the artist’s complete career.

In collaboration with Claudio Bruni Sakraischik and Isabella Far, a general catalogue of the artist’s complete works was begun. He received many official awards including Académie Française in 1974; the Cruz de Gran Official of the German

\footnote{236} ibid. p., 186.
\footnote{237} Soby, \textit{Giorgio de Chirico}, op. cit., pp. 11-12.
Appendix B

Dionysos and Ariadne

The triumphal god was especially associated in the tales with one particular woman. In a famous story she attained to that very position which all Dionysiac women held in their own minds: that of the wife of Dionysos, his only true companion. She was the only one who was ever spoken of as the god’s wife, and her name was Ariadne. In the form in which the story of her became famous, she was the daughter of King Minos and of Pasiphae, daughter of the Sun: a mortal maiden, but with the name of a goddess. “Ariadne”, originally “Ariadne”, meant the “holy” and “pure”; it was a superlative form of Hagne, a surname of the queen of the Underworld. The goddess bearing this name was worshipped on many islands.

Ariadne the mortal maiden had as her counterpart a sister and rival named Phaidra, “the bright”, and indeed also a second, victorious lover of Theseus, whose name was Aigle, “the shining”. This second, bright aspect, however, was directly connected with Ariadne herself: she was also called Aridela, “the visible from afar”, a name that she obviously acquired after she had been raised to heaven with Dionysos.

Under the name of Ariadne she was Theseus’s accomplice in the slaying of her brother, the bull-headed son of Minos, who is chiefly known as a monster called the Minotaur. To judge by his other name of Asterios, however, he was a “Star” amongst his own people - just as Dionysos, too, was invoked as a star in his quality of boy-child of the Mysteries.

In the best known form of the story, Ariadne’s only part in the slaying was to rescue Theseus and the Athenian children who had been thrown to the monster. She gave the hero the thread that enabled him to find his way out of the Labyrinth in which the Minotaur dwelt. Theseus took Ariadne and her sister Phaidra aboard his ship, but left Ariadne on the island of Dia, of which I shall have more to say. The forsaken girl lay deeply asleep while the ship sailed off with all those whom she had saved. But she was not left there alone. One story mentions that her nurse escaped with her and remained on the island. Theseus never took Ariadne to wife. But this was not because he was unfaithful to her: for it was further told that Dionysos appeared to him in a
dream and announced that the girl belonged to the god himself. This seems, according to most of the tales, to have been actually the case, although on the other hand it is expressly stated that Ariadne was one of the great sinners, since she helped to kill her own brother. According to the best known tale, Ariadne was asleep when Theseus left her, and Dionysos appeared on the island in his stead as rescuer and bridegroom. According to other, much older tales she was actually dead by then. Artemis had killed her at the request of Dionysos: a fate that Ariadne share with Koronis, the beloved of Apollo.

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Fig. 1. De Chirico, The Soothsayer's Recompense

Fig. 2. Ariadne
Fig. 3 Ariadne by Cornelius van Cleve

Fig. 4 De Chirico. Meditation of the Infinite

Fig. 5 De Chirico. Piazza d'Italia
Fig. 8. Sante Croce Piazza

Fig. 6. De Chirico, The Enigma of the Autumn Afternoon

Fig. 7. De Chirico, The Enigma of the Oracle
Fig. 9. Apollo Belvedere

Fig. 10. Monument to Cavour

Fig. 11. De Chirico, The Enigma of the Day
Fig. 17. Monument to Carlo Alberto

Fig. 18. De Chirico, The Red Tower
Fig. 27. Double Self Portrait

Fig. 28. De Chirico, Metaphysical Muses

Fig. 29. De Chirico, Two Sisters

Fig. 30. De Chirico, Metaphysical Muses

Fig. 31. De Chirico, Two Masks
Fig. 38 & 39. Praxitele's Hermes

Fig. 40. De Chirico. The Meditation of Mercury
Fig. 44. Apollo of Pombino and detail

Fig. 45. De Chirico, The Two Sisters
Fig. 44. De Chirico, The Mysterious Bathhouses

Fig. 45. De Chirico, Autumn Meditation

Fig. 46. De Chirico, The Mysterious Bathhouses
Fig. 47. De Chirico, The Return of Ulysses

Fig. 48. De Chirico, The Furniture

Fig. 49. De Chirico, The Furniture in the Valley

Fig. 50. De Chirico, Sun on the Easel

Fig. 51. De Chirico, Chair