

Giuseppe Cordoni – The Source of a Dream

Prague: the city of Anna Chromy

Cité claire, intacte. Où je vais, moi qui te bénis,
Nulle aube ne brille jamais, et nulle cité
Simone Weil

Every memory that goes back to our remotest infancy returns in the form of a dream. It has the same mysterious evanescence as a dream. It restores the innocent perspective of our childhood gaze. Prague under the snow is a marvel of astonishing light. The river is a tense strip that sparkles between the candid domes and towers. Never again will she see as pink a sky ahead beyond the Karl Bridge, just a moment before sunset. Anna, in a dream, crosses it for the first time, holding her mother's hand. She is a sweet child, not yet four, who fixes things with her eye to keep them from escaping her memory. Prague is on the verge of plunging into a rapid winter twilight.....besieged by ice and wound in a mantle of sorrow. From up there on the bridge Anna observes the frozen statues along the riverbanks. She doesn't know their identity: whether they were saints or heroes. For her they are merely gigantic creatures frozen in their misery. What if nobody ever caresses them again? They will certainly die of cold if someone doesn't come and warm them up.

She wasn't born here, but this is her mother's city. This is a real city waiting for her - with its unexpected metamorphoses - and it greets her with an all too tight embrace of light and shade. She feels immediately that she cannot escape the icy fascination of these stones she knows nothing about. Nor does she know yet that an emperor built this bridge as a challenge. Its arches forever filter in a maternal lay all the waters of the heart of Europe. And one day Smetana transformed it into the morning hymn of this melodious river. Here we see the spirit of a city breathe in the way that its beauty dictates. Prague exercises its extraordinary powers of seduction from this very bridge, now frozen and deserted. But Anna as a child could hardly know the subtle relation-ship that unites music and death. This unity is captured in Don Giovanni, which was heard here for the very first time. Mozart wrote here, in this very place, the chords that rend open the abyss. Anna is unaware that this is a winter of war and fear: the echo of that tragic music wafts across the years. It speaks of other catastrophes, of other chasms that gape open in the heartland of Europe.....of other collective seductions that have failed miserably. The light of the snow shines out from behind a sad mask. But the fascinated gaze of the child is aware - without being able to explain it - of the impor- tance of the history of all that surrounds her. She penetrates things she doesn't know: Prague is this mystery of beauty that seems something you merely dreamed of. The choice of dedicating ones life to art is never a clear, deliberate one. Frequently, beyond infancy, one feels the disturbing presence of a mystery that remains well focused but

undeciphered like a recurring dream. Thus the thousand faces of Prague discovered by Anna Chromy as a child keep on invading her memory over and over again. They appear before her like unexpected visions. They ask for no explanation, but simply to be evoked and painted like secret images. The smile of her mother's eyes appears before her, cerulean blue like the river lit by the dawn. It seems to her as if her