



Bleedings

Incipit Tragoedia

G A B R I E L E T I N T I

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Bleedings

Incipit Tragedia

Dear figure

Dear figure, do you really summon my song?

ἦ πεφόβησαι.

Terrenum corpus

Terrenum corpus,
it is memory, it weighs down.

Smearred with words
it wears away.

It is six foot three.
It is bottomless, it devours.

It comes from afar.
Made of light and shade.

It well knows that out there
there is more: a danger,

a curse,
a blessing.

It takes the road
it knows its end.

Down there the phantoms
become dust.

There is no choice but
to shorten one's step,

to grit one's teeth
to hone hope;

to not be content
with the bones.

The grass will grow from my breast

I will decay there with you, shrivel up defying fate.
I will chew what remains with my mouth full.

The grass will grow from my breast, it will plaster my hair,
let me drown in the noise of my ancestors.

King of the pools

King of the pools you wallow
in the ruins of words,

you knock into the loops of the veins,
sink into the soft bank

that wants you.

I go up to get hurt

I go up to get hurt
on this ancient hill,
full of faith in the horizon.
Sed quid ego hoc cerno?
The shadow of a yew
with branches stretched
around the neck,
ready to clench.
The sky sneers
a cruel quip,
the clouds show me
the direction of dawn.
I remain suspended
in this repetition
of days gone by,
of lost signs.

You hang paralyzed

You hang paralyzed
over the emptiness of the day.

You disturb the quiet
of ancient relics,

cut off your breath,
close your throat.

You throw open the door
of your beating bowels.

You have already had your share.

Ancient words breathe

Ancient words breathe,
they force you to listen.

It is late: your stomach
burns, your eyes throb.

Hec uia tale puluer habet.
Leave a sign there — you weigh down.

4

Infected by the tears
of the offended simulacra,

you can do nothing but go out
to quench your thirst.

Your step quickens, reopens
the wound, defiles the earth.

Better go back to the shelter
for a while, to forget.

This is no time to sleep

This is no time to sleep,
the rain is coming.

It will drizzle on the parched vein,
roll to the horizon,

quicken fate.

Please go

Please go ahead, towards the right,
towards the sacred woods of Persephone.

There you will lose your dizziness,
your violent songs, your idols.

You should have done so long ago,
but you chase dangerous fantasies,

you insist on wandering,
on laughing at the top of your voice,

on bleeding.

As you sink

As you sink stay with the bodies of the past.
You are foreign even to your dearest, an outcast,
a cold meal.

You fear the steps

You fear the steps of the punctured lives,
the engraved temples, the deformed

bodies.

You fear the strut
of that burnt torso,

the thrill of the needle,
the breath of the shadows.

You fear the solitude,
the smell of sadness,

the high choir of the graves.

Here we fired the shot

Here we fired the shot.

Plug my wound if you like,
inject the broth

you made ready,
that handful of words.

You'll close my eyes

You'll close my eyes,
you'll remember how it was,
you'll lead the way.

Don't leave my body to the dogs

Don't leave my body to the dogs,
burn it far away with its ills.

The fire will cleanse its wounds, the ashes
will soothe its challenges. At a thousand degrees

my bite will still be strong,
my sin, this comedy.

Endnotes

- 1 *Or perhaps you were scared of it?*
From an inscription by Flavia Sophe. Inv. 40556 + 40662.
Conserved in the Museo Nazionale Romano, Roma.
- 2 *My body is earth.*
- 3 *What is that that I see?*
- 4 *This road has such dust.*
- 5 *Alas.*
- 6 *I have been born many times
but never like this.*
I have altered and adapted the epigraph “Aliquoties mortuus sum, set sic nunquam,” “I have died many times but never like this” to: “Aliquoties natus sum, set sic nunquam,” “I have been born many times but never like this.”
- 7 *Shake your head, won't you?
Yet here you must go back.*
- 8 *Now now.
Immediately immediately.*
- 9 *I plead with you, stone, to rest lightly on my bones.*
- 10 *You will find my names engraved in my epitaph.*
From Epitaffio in versi per un poeta. Inv. 29408. Lettere incise.
Conserved in the Museo Nazionale Romano.
- 11 *Who are you?
I am a stone.*
Pebble inscribed in Oscan alphabet, 150–90 BCE. Inv. 247546.
Conserved in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli.
- 12 *I am nothing but a handful of ashes in a pyre on which to weep.*
From Epitaffio in versi per un poeta. Inv. 29408. Lettere incise.
Conserved in the Museo Nazionale Romano.

Author's Note

The inserts in Latin — where not specified in the notes — are taken from a selection of ancient epigraphic texts collected in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinorum*, Berlin 1863–1959, F. Buecheler, *Carmina Latina Epigraphica*, Leipzig 1895–1897, H. Dessau, *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*, Berlin 1892–1916.

The main source for the epigraphic collection at the Museo Nazionale Romano, is the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali Soprintendenza Speciale catalogue (Milan: Electa, 2012).

Regarding the epigraphic collection at the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli, reference is made to the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali Soprintendenza Speciale catalogue (Milan: Electa, 2017).

Thanks to Prof. Giusto Picone of Palermo University for comparing the translations that I have at times freely interpreted and adapted to the text.

Some epigrams were inspired by the Greek epitaphs collected by Werner Peek and those in the *Antologia Palatina*.

For the Greek, thanks to Monica Volcan, patient friend.

The poems “Gladiators,” “The Seer,” “Song of Love,” and “Prodigal Son” were inspired by the works of the same names by Giorgio de Chirico.

The works by masters like Mantegna, Bramante, and Rosa were the activators of some of the poems in this collection.

Special thanks to Pierluigi Cerri, my first supporter, and to the directors James Bradburne (Pinacoteca di Brera), Fabrizio Masucci (Museo Cappella Sansevero), and Alfonsina Russo (Parco Archeologico del Colosseo) for having been valuable old-fashioned patrons over these years.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gabriele Tinti', with a stylized, cursive script.

A recent recipient of the Montale Poetry Award, GABRIELE TINTI is an Italian poet & writer. He has worked with the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the British Museum, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the National Roman Museum, the Capitolini Museums, the Archaeological Museum in Naples, the Ara Pacis Museums, the Colosseum and the Glyptothek of Munich, composing poems for ancient works of art, including *The Boxer at Rest*, the *Discobolus*, *Arundel Head*, the *Ludovisi Gaul*, the *Victorious Youth*, the *Farnese Hercules*, the *Hercules* by Scopas, the *Elgin Marbles* from the Parthenon, the *Barberini Faun* and many other masterpieces.

His poems have been recited by actors like Abel Ferrara, Marton Csokas, Kevin Spacey, Malcolm McDowell, Stephen Fry, Joe Mantegna, Michael Imperioli, Burt Young, Robert Davi, Jamie McShane, James Cosmo, Vincent Piazza, and Franco Nero.

In 2016 he published *Last Words* (Skira Rizzoli), a collection of found poetry in association with Andres Serrano.

In 2020 Tinti published *The Earth Will Come To Laugh and To Feast* (New York: Powerhouse Books), a poetry collection with illustrations by the artist Roger Ballen.

In 2021 he published *Ruins* (London: Eris Press).

COLOPHON



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Bleedings — Incipit Tragœdia

is a series of poems Tinti composed in the spring of 2020. The epigraphic collections of the National Roman Museum, the Capitoline Museums, and the National Archæological Museum of Naples, as well as the most recent funerary inscriptions, were a spur for this work that aims to transfigure our fear of death, pain, and suffering. A writing that starts from ruins, crosses cemeteries, and smells wounds, the traces of what has disappeared. It is born of a memory of the ancient & a contempt for the contemporary.

