

THREE QUESTIONS TO THE POET

TONINO GUERRA

The original idea of the video/interview “Three questions to the poet”, was conceived by the landscape gardener Anna Kauber and realized with the collaboration of Lucilla Pesce, a multi disciplinary artist who attended to the shooting in April 2010. During our five day stay in Pennabilli Lucilla and I were often guests at the Maestro’s home (la *Casa dei Mandorli*) and began “discovering” his surroundings which he called "the places of the soul": particular places, generally embedded in nature, which he invited us to visit. Santarcangelo di Romagna, Valmarecchia and Sant’Agata Feltria among many others; the Tower and the walls of the Castle of Bascio and of Petrella Guidi. The images of these places where Tonino Guerra lived and worked for some decades appear in the video.

They can be considered as “open air museums” – old demolished walls, abandoned villages, little woods, dried up wells, small churches in danger of collapsing..... And also certain town squares, radiant plains moving in the wind, dismantled facades of uninhabited houses still bearing artistic traces. In his contact with the natural environment and the “*piccole cose*” (small things) Tonino Guerra’s poetics found a spur and nourishment.

His first poems were written in Germany in 1944-45, when he was a prisoner in a nazi concentration camp. His deep love for the land and his faith in the values of the peasant world (which, as Natalia Ginzburg claims, the poet celebrates “in a memorable and incomparable way”) influenced his wide literary activity. It is not by chance that great part of his poetic production is written in his Romagna dialect (a fact that had deeply delighted also Pierpaolo Pasolini). Because of his precise ethical and artistic position Elsa Morante considered him as the “Homer of the peasant world”. With his light and sublime touch, through the magic of his words or the powerful enchantment of his artistic interventions, the poet managed to reveal to our eyes – often blinded by our superficial and hasty visions - the subtle beauty, the complexity and greatness hidden in the simplest and “humblest” aspects of life.

Besides his prolific activity as a poet and writer, Tonino Guerra attained great achievements as art director of over one hundred films some of which by the most famous not only Italian film makers among whom Federico Fellini and Michelangelo Antonioni, who were great friends of his.

Tonino Guerra was tireless in promoting ideas and fostering initiatives in favour of the protection and preservation of ancient peasant traditions and of the land, values which, with great sorrow, he realized were gradually disappearing. In 1990 the Maestro created in Pennabilli the "*Orto dei frutti dimenticati*, (The garden of forgotten fruits), the first botanical garden in Italy in which species of fruit no longer on the market and therefore condemned to extinction fruit could be found. A “museum of tastes”, as he himself called it, dedicated to the younger generations so that “they could experience the tastes that sweetened the mouths of their grandparents”.

Coming in contact with him and his world made us discover a special, unique, extraordinary and involving approach to life. The passion, irony, the depth of Tonino Guerra’s penetrating and sensitive outlook on “the things of the world” will always remain in our hearts.

Just after turning into his splendid age of ninety, the Maestro offered, with great spontaneity, this enormous, precious gift to us – who were almost strangers – and who shared with him a brief lapse of time, which was intense and enchanting like the fluttering of a butterfly’s wings.