

# Staging (or Not Staging) Ovid for Modern(ist) Self-Fashioning<sup>1</sup>



*Alessandro Giammei and Taylor Yoonji Kang*

“Se una sola verità nelle altre cose manca,  
perché cercare una sola verità nelle parole?”

“Why seek a single truth in words if there is  
no one truth to anything else?”

Alberto Savinio, 1948<sup>2</sup>

Two crucial protagonists of international Modernism met, on the eve of World War I, in Paris: Alberto Savinio, one of the inventors of Metaphysical aesthetics, and Michel Fokine, the star choreographer of the Ballets Russes. After this vanguardist, continental interlude, their artistic and material destinies took them in almost opposite directions: the increasingly dominant scene of American mainstream theatre for Fokine, and the risky, willfully isolated and contradictory, even proudly provincial, cultural landscape of fascist Italy for Savinio. This article investigates the only product of their brief creative collaboration: an

<sup>1</sup>Research for this article was supported by the Society of Fellows in the Liberal Arts and the Department of Comparative Literature at Princeton University, as well as the Department of Italian and Italian Studies at Bryn Mawr College. The authors wish to thank Isabelle Fokine and Rachel Daniels, the Harvard Theatre Collection at the Houghton Library (in particular Matthew Wittmann), and the Dance Research Division at the New York Public Library (in particular John Pennino). For their comments and suggestions, the authors also thank Ara Merjian, Keala Jewell, and Roberta Ricci, as well as the *MLN* editors and reviewers.

<sup>2</sup>Savinio “Aventura delle parole”. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are by the authors.

elaboration of the Ovidian myth of Perseus and Medusa that, because of both artists' conflicting strategies of self-representation in the interwar period, generated nine decades of what we may today call "fake news." Besides re-establishing the historical truth and showing how such "fake news" developed and spread (from interwar encyclopedias and journals, to *Wikipedia* and current scholarship), the following pages will interpret this story of contradictory claims as a case of modern self-fashioning, adapting an idea conceived for Renaissance social behavior to the ways in which the use of industrialized media and the pressures of totalitarian culture can shape the construction of a 20th-century artist's public persona.

### 1. Nonagenarian Fake News

Richard Pevear's masterful translation of the posthumous collection of stories *Signor Dido* is the latest Anglophone edition of a book by Alberto Savinio. The research that led to this essay was triggered by the biographical note on the flap of that book, published in 2014:

Alberto Savinio (Andrea Francesco Alberto de Chirico) was born in Athens in 1891 and died in 1952. While still a teenager his musical compositions had drawn notice, he was a celebrated pianist, and his third opera, *Perseus*, had its premiere at The Metropolitan Opera in New York in 1924. He wrote more than forty books including novels, criticism, and memoirs. (Savinio *Signor Dido*)

This brief presentation of Savinio's accomplishments is rather curious. The most obvious remark to make is that even including translations, exhibition catalogues, and theatrical works published during his life, the attribution of "more than forty books" to the author's pen would still be a generous overestimation.<sup>3</sup> Yet, some excess is quite forgivable with such a prolific writer, and the figures would add up if one counted all the book projects and the unfinished manuscripts that philologists and biographers have listed in the past half-century.<sup>4</sup> What may raise the eyebrows of those biographers and philologists, almost invariably experts in either art history or literature, is the selection of the information for the narrow, telegraphic editorial space, whose central and largest portion is surprisingly devoted to music.

<sup>3</sup>Savinio published a total of seventeen books during his life, and six more books were published posthumously. All of Savinio's books—along with most of his writings that were previously unpublished or only published in periodicals—have been collected and edited by philologists Alessandro Tinterri and Paola Italia in three volumes that form his complete works: see Savinio *Hernaphrodito*, *Casa la vita*, and *Scritti disperse*.

<sup>4</sup>About Savinio's unfinished projects, see Italia *Le carte di Alberto Savinio*. A general catalogue of his pictorial work with a rich section of biographic and bibliographic material is Vivarelli, *Savinio*.

There is no mention of Savinio's successful career as a painter, nor of his major contributions to Europe's modernism, not a word on the fact that, according to André Breton (287), his early writings, along with the paintings of his brother Giorgio de Chirico, initiated French Surrealism. The seven lines on the flap are largely related to the most conflictual and arguably less impactful of Savinio's talents. Why so much attention to music?

If the task, from the publisher's point of view, is to make Savinio's prominence relevant to casual Anglophone readers, then the micro-narrative of the blurb is probably explained by the intention of highlighting "his third opera, *Perseus*." While only vaguely alluding to dozens of other works, the anonymous author of the flap must have decided to mention that one title because of its early, prestigious, Fitzgeraldian premiere at the Metropolitan: quite a direct access to any contemporary American imagination—especially considering the Italian flavor of the genre and the incongruous but captivating musical title, *Operatic Lives*, by which the author's most famous book is known in the English speaking world.<sup>5</sup> After all, Savinio's aficionados are probably already aware of his successes in the context of continental vanguardism, while this less central but more recognizable fact (an operatic debut on New York's most important stage, right in the middle of the Roaring Twenties) is immediately significant for a wider, less informed readership that might actually need to be introduced to the author's figure altogether. The problem is that the fact, as it is recalled, is false. Savinio's third opera is about Orpheus, not Perseus, and was written in 1950, after thirty-five years of musical inactivity.<sup>6</sup> The subjects of his previous two operas—the unpublished *Carmela* (1909) and the unfinished *Le trésor de Ramsésnit* (1912)—were Neapolitan fishers and Egyptian pharaohs, and neither work ever premiered on the stage.<sup>7</sup> No opera by Savinio, in any event, was ever performed at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, not even after his death.

The history of this false claim is much older than 2014, and the American edition of *Signor Dido* appears to be just the last whisper in a multilingual "broken telephone" game that endured for decades in studies and biographies. Even Savinio's English entry in *Wikipedia* includes, at the time we are publishing this essay, a 1924 debut at the Metropolitan, referencing a curious internet page (overtly amateur<sup>8</sup>, and yet titled "A definitive history of the surrealist movement") as its

<sup>5</sup>The original, *Narrate uomini la vostra storia*, is literally translatable as 'Men, tell your stories.'

<sup>6</sup>Savinio, "Orfeo vedovo." On this opera, see Italia, "Savinio librettista."

<sup>7</sup>On Savinio's operatic work, see Tinterri.

<sup>8</sup>From the section 'about this site,' signed 'Stephen': 'Back in late 1998 I wanted a website, any website and since I enjoyed surrealist art it was suggested to me that I get the name and build a site.' <http://www.surrealist.com/aboutThisSite.aspx>

source. However, just as in the 1998 website, *Perseus* is correctly referred to as “his ballet” by the anonymous editor M0ntekar101, who added the information in November 2009. As a matter of fact, Savinio did write a ballet titled *Persée*, but it was never performed in New York.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, scholars have been consistently referring to the 1924 premiere at the Metropolitan in all sorts of academic sources. In her book on Savinio’s writing, Marià Elena Gutiérrez cites the ballet and names its choreographer, Michel Fokine, stating that the 1913 work was performed “solo undici anni dopo, nel 1924, al Metropolitan di New York” (16). The same reconstruction appeared in the most important Italian dictionary of modern theatre, while the main national encyclopedia, the *Treccani*, only mentions the date of the alleged premiere in its entry on the author (D’Amico 1543).<sup>10</sup> The short biographical essay that follows the 1984 German translation of Savinio’s *Introduction à un vie de Mercure*, on the pages of the journal *Schreibheft*, is slightly less succinct on the matter: “sein Ballet Perseus wird 1924 an der New Yorker Metropolitan-Oper aufgeführt” (Savinio “Einführung” 90). Michel Fokine is mentioned as the author of the “livret,” of the “azione coreografica,” and of the “choreography” respectively in a French anthology of Savinio’s short stories (Savinio *Vie des fantômes*), in an Italian monograph on Savinio’s theatre (Valentino 8),<sup>11</sup> and in an English book on Surrealism (Alexandrian 241), all confirming the 1924 premiere in New York. A similar formula is repeated in many other volumes and essays,<sup>12</sup> only occasionally accompanied by the caveat that no actual documentation could be found to corroborate it.<sup>13</sup>

In any event, Savinio’s real *Persée* was indeed written in collaboration with Michel Fokine, the master of the Russian Ballets. A first-hand

<sup>9</sup>*Persée* was never staged at all, and was only performed by Savinio himself in his own piano reductions. Besides the public performances mentioned in the following pages, it is worth noting that Massimo Bontempelli (one of the most popular and influential Italian writers of the fascist ventennio, and a friend of the de Chirico brothers) described a private performance of the *Persée* in his mostly experimental novel *La vita intensa* (1920), recalling a 1919 evening in Milan with a number of guests (including Marinetti, the founder of Futurism): “S’erano accese discussioni parziali, più o meno animate a seconda dei caratteri, soffocate tutte dal tumultuare aristesco del pianoforte su cui Savinio aveva attaccato il primo atto del *Perseo*. [. . . ] [D]i sotto alle sue innumerevoli dita scaturì il tema magniloquente di Poseidon.” Bontempelli (142).

<sup>10</sup>Savinio’s entry is available online, see <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/alberto-savinio/>

<sup>11</sup>According to Valentino, Savinio wrote the music for the ballet in 1912.

<sup>12</sup>Including the introduction of Savinio’s most important book about music: see Rognoni XVIII.

<sup>13</sup>For instance the catalog of musical works included in the official website of the Fondazione Alberto Savinio simply adds “Incerta la notizia di un’esecuzione a New York nel 1924” to the entry about the 1913 *Persée*. <http://albertosavinio.it/en/music/>. The list is based on Porzio’s monograph, which also cautiously mentions the information in its bibliography without confirming it.

authoritative source, Guillaume Apollinaire, friend of both artists, recorded the creative partnership in a swift artistic chronicle for the *Paris Journal* dated July 7, 1914:

Albert Savinio qui, après avoir joué de sa musique au dîner des Amis de dimanche, exécuta de remarquables caricatures de Paul Lombard, de Raymond Groc, Michel Larionow, Fernand Léger, se rend à Londres, où M. Serge de Diaghilew l'invite pur y traiter de l'acquisition de la musique d'importants ouvrages chorégraphiques, dont l'un, *Persée*, fut spécialement composé et commandé à Savinio par M. Michel Fokine, le remarquable metteur en scène des ballets russes.<sup>14</sup>

This productive relationship between Savinio and Fokine within the circle of *Les Soirées de Paris* is confirmed in the scholarship related to the choreographer, and the successful completion of the *Persée* is proved by a concert sponsored by Apollinaire's journal itself (Figure 1). On May 24 1914, a hundred years before the publication of the flap from which we started, Savinio played piano reductions of all his major Parisian compositions: the program printed on *Les Soirées* includes one act from the opera *Le Trésor de Rampsénit*, two tableaux from the ballet *Deux amours dans la nuit*, and, before an integral execution of the "drame-ballet" *Niobe*, one tableau and one entire act from our *Persée*, described as a "Ballet en 3 act. et 5 tabl. de M. Michel Fokine." While the existence of this ballet on Perseus, set to music by Savinio on Michel Fokine's commission, is certain, there is still no evidence of any performance besides Savinio's own piano reductions.<sup>15</sup> One might argue that, exactly in 1924, Fokine debuted on the Metropolitan stage with a ballet whose title, *Medusa*, could have caused confusion (Figure 2). However, according to any study of Fokine's work (and to the archives of the Metropolitan itself) *Medusa* was choreographed to music by Tchaikovsky—as we will discuss further—and the different title should have discouraged any biographer from attaching Savinio's name to the American premiere.<sup>16</sup>

An unsatisfactory explanation for the enduring mistake lays in a document that a few recent biographies and chronologies mention as their only, unverifiable source:<sup>17</sup> a list of achievements that Savinio

<sup>14</sup>Text quoted from the reprint (*Petites Flâneries* 126).

<sup>15</sup>News of at least one of these performances of the piano reductions are available: on December 20, 1919, Savinio publicly performed both his Ovidian ballets at Milan's conservatory (See the anonymous review "Nel concerto al conservatorio" 18). A longer review, also anonymous, appeared in *Corriere della sera* on December 21 (cited in Italia, *Il pellegrino* 132–133).

<sup>16</sup>For a general assessment of *Medusa* in Fokine's career, see Horowitz (91–96); and Beaumont (163–168).

<sup>17</sup>See for instance Pia Vivarelli's chronology in the exhibition catalogue Vivarelli, Pinottini, and Savinio (145).

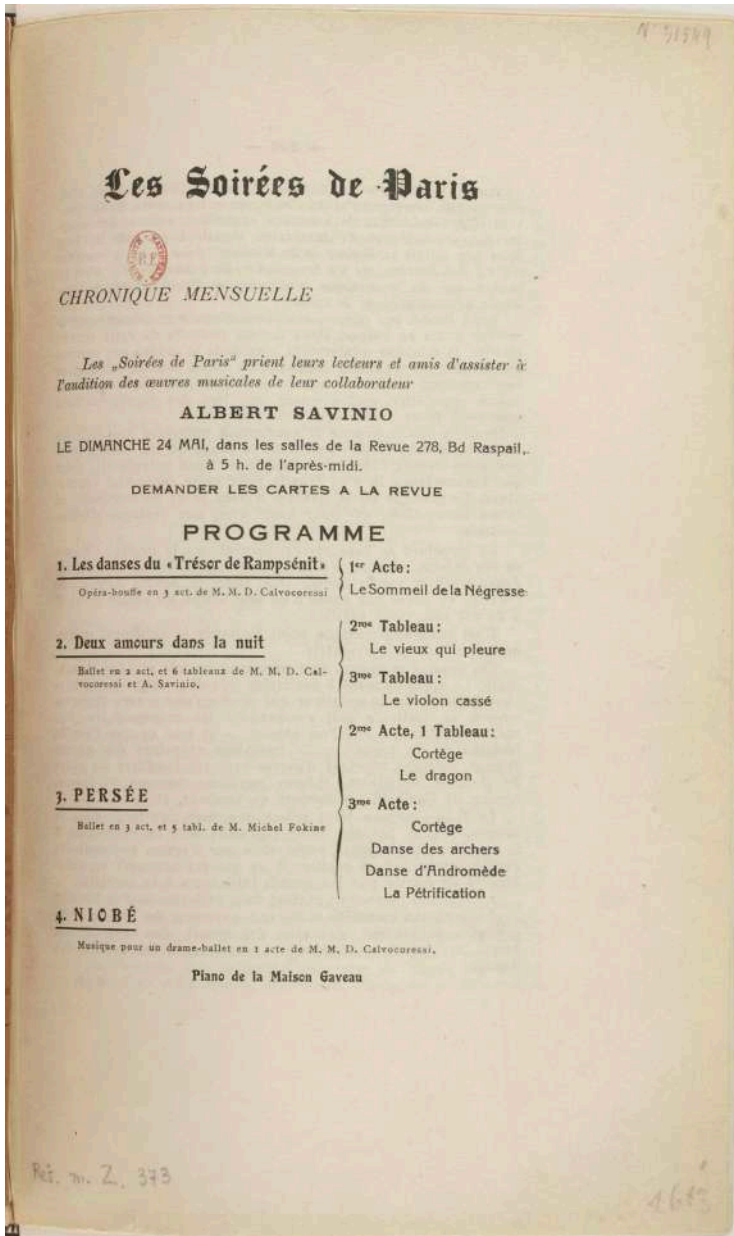


Figure 1. Program of Alberto Savinio's concert at the Salle de la Revue, May 24, 1914. From *Les Soirées de Paris* 3 (24). Mary 1914: 245. Photograph © 2020 Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.



Figure 2. Michel Fokine and Vera Fokina as Perseus and Medusa in publicity photograph. "Wherein Aesthetes Get Rough." *New York City Telegram* (February 23, 1924). Photograph © 2020 Houghton Library, Harvard Theatre Collection, Cambridge (MA).

himself penned in 1927, less than a year after the beginning of his career as a painter. In this resumé of sorts, Savinio claims a number of successes, including four ballets with their respective premieres (*Persée* is the only international one).

Ho scritto quattro balletti, *Amori della Notte*, *Perseo*, *La morte di Niobe* e *Ballata delle Stagioni*. *Perseo*, su libretto di Fokine, fu rappresentato al Metropolitan di New York nel 1924, *La Morte di Niobe* fu rappresentata nel 1925 al Teatro di



Pirandello a Roma, e nello stesso anno *Ballata delle Stagioni* fu rappresentata alla Fenice di Venezia, poi al Filodrammatico di Trieste.<sup>18</sup>

While this shows that Savinio believed (or wanted others to believe) that the 1924 *Medusa* at the Metropolitan was the same *Persée* that he had written with Fokine in Paris ten years before, the nature of the document does not justify the early, international diffusion of the mistake. The document, dated November 5, 1927, was in fact a letter to Lionello Fiumi, and it remained private until 1954, two years after Savinio's death, when it was published in the journal *Realtà*. The *Realtà* edition might be the origin of most of the many post-war academic mentions of the fake Metropolitan premiere. However, it does not explain why similar references to a New York debut were circulating during Savinio's life. The supposed 1924 performance of Savinio's *Persée* was mentioned in Spanish, for instance, in the 1931 appendix of the authoritative *Enciclopedia Espasa* ("como compositor ha dado al teatro los folletos *Perseo*, estrenado en el Metropolitan, de Nueva York, en 1924 [ . . . ]").<sup>19</sup> Three years later, in the April issue of the journal *L'Amour de l'Art* ("Alberto Savinio" 490), the information appeared again in French, in a bio-bibliographical paragraph about Savinio: "*Persée*, ballet en 3 actes et 5 tableaux, sujet de Michel Fokine, représenté au Metropolitan théâtre de New-York." And in the same turn of years (1932–35, to be precise), the American performance was included in the biographical blurbs that accompanied Savinio's *Processi*—a series of illustrated fictional trials—in the Italian legal magazine *I Rostri* ("Alberto Savinio" 64: "Perseo, rappresentato al Metropolitan di New York").

The web of references to this false event is tangled, but a comprehensive examination of Savinio's biographical and autobiographical notes throughout the past century shows that the earliest mention of the *Persée* at the Metropolitan appeared in a popular Italian "who's who" ("come musicista ha dato al teatro i balletti *Perseo* (Metropolitan di New York, 1924) [ . . . ]").<sup>20</sup> This Italian publication, titled "dictionary of today's Italians" (*Chi è? Dizionario degli italiani d'oggi*), had

<sup>18</sup>Alberto Savinio, letter to Lionello Fiumi (Paris, November 5, 1927), printed in Fiumi (3).

<sup>19</sup>*Enciclopedia universal* 1931, vol. 3 (1486). Interestingly, in the 2002 *supplemento* of the *Espasa* Savinio's biography is completely re-shaped to highlight literature and art, and the connection with the Surrealist movement. No mention of the ballets is included, and the entry is under 'Savinio' rather than 'De Chirico'. See *Enciclopedia universal* 2003, vol. 8 (1468).

<sup>20</sup>Formiggini (292). This entry on Savinio, incidentally, seems to be directly translated into the aforementioned Spanish one in the original entry of the *Enciclopedia Espasa*.



its first edition in 1928 and was then updated and re-printed seven times up until 1961. From its birth to the 1936 edition, it was published and edited by Angelo Fortunato Formiggini, a notable and inventive publisher based in Rome who lost his enterprise and killed himself in 1938, after the promulgation of the Racial Laws. In the Thirties, within the cultural scene of fascist Rome, Formiggini and Savinio were friends, as the latter remembered in a 1946 article for *La Lettura* (now in Savinio *Scritti dispersi* 449), and they collaborated on Savinio's Italian translation of Brantôme's *Vies des dames galantes*, published by Formiggini in 1937. One could speculate that Savinio privately informed Formiggini about the supposed New York debut, as he did in 1927 with Fiumi. However, it is unlikely that the two could be already in contact in 1928: Savinio moved to Paris in 1927 to start his painting career, and would not return to Rome until 1933. While Formiggini's 1928 *Chi è?* is a crucial Italian *terminus post quem* for the editorial diffusion of the false information about the *Persée*, it is not the origin of such a persistent rumor. But if Formiggini did not learn about it from Savinio, nor draw on any previously published biography, where did he read the fake news about the Metropolitan premiere?

Before 1928, Savinio publicly vaunted the nonexistent New York debut only once. He did so from France, in an interview for the Parisian cultural newspaper *Comœdia* published on November 30, 1927. This interview, which was part of a series of Franco-Italian dialogues published between 1927 and 1928 under the title *L'Italie et nous*, was never mentioned as a source by the biographies discussed so far, but it is the most likely origin of the operatic factoid. Formiggini, just as most fascist and anti-fascist intellectuals, probably learned about the alleged premiere from the article because of its political repercussions: despite being relatively obscure today, the French interview had in fact a strong impact in Italy, as is documented in a brief but illuminating study (Frabetti). While most of the interviews with Italian intellectuals in the series were sympathetic to fascism and fascist culture, Savinio and his brother Giorgio de Chirico (interviewed two weeks later by the same journalist, Pierre Lagarde<sup>21</sup>) shocked the public by declaring that Italy was intellectually dead and expressing their preference for Paris over the uninteresting stagnation of the arts under fascism. Savinio in particular critiqued Mussolini only obliquely, but he did

<sup>21</sup>Giorgio's interview was re-printed in de Chirico (281–283). It was re-printed again, along with Savinio's one, in the journal of the Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico—see Giudici.

not hold punches against his rhetoric, his followers and imitators, and the worrisome social and political climate of his regime in general:

L'Italie ne peut, actuellement rien présenter d'intéressant au point de vue intellectuel. Un pays qui a tant de préoccupations sociales et politiques ne peut se consacrer aux arts. Mussolini a d'ailleurs déclaré qu'il ne voulait à aucun prix d'une dictature intellectuelle. Lui, personnellement, déteste ceux qui veulent implanter comme un style officiel fasciste, ce style plein de périodes et d'éloquence qu'il avait lui-même lorsque, jeune journaliste, il imitait Papini. (Lagarde)

A number of Italian artists, writers, and critics, especially from the localist and strongly philo-fascist movement Strapaese, responded harshly to the brothers' declarations, perceived as anti-Italian (see for instance Giolli and Oppò). Their fellow painter Carlo Carrà in particular, who had joined their Metaphysical school in Ferrara during World War I, accused them of stupidity and gullible servility to the French in a famous article for the Strapaese flagship journal, *Il Selvaggio* (94). But the most tangible consequence of the interviews was the banishment of both brothers, in 1928, from the Parisian exhibition of Italian painters at the Salon de l'Éscalier (organized by the fascist painter Mario Tozzi) and, more importantly, from the sixteenth Venice Biennale (cfr. Frabetti 74–75).

The grudge against Savinio and de Chirico in Italy mitigated very slowly in the following years, thanks to a series of retractions, denials, and commendations of the Italian spirit and art by the two brothers,<sup>22</sup> who were welcomed again at the Biennale only in 1930. On that occasion Savinio publicly reiterated his abjuration of the 1927 interview, blaming the interviewer for misunderstanding and altering his answers.<sup>23</sup>

This political incident made Savinio's 1927 interview with *Comœdia* widely known and read in France and in Italy. And in it, along the lines of the problematic xenophilia that he soon had to repress, he mentioned a 1924 New York debut of his *Persée* among his main achievements:

<sup>22</sup>See for instance Savinio's letter to Giuseppe Raimondi, quoted by both Frabetti and Giudici. The exhibited Italianness of the brothers' articles in *Valori Plastici* after 1927 must also be related to this episode.

<sup>23</sup>Here is Savinio's declaration to Prampolini: 'Intervista nella quale il mio pensiero e le mie parole furono iniquamente trasformate [ . . . ] l'ostilità di questi nostri conazionali dovrà sparire, ormai, perché 'arte moderna' è per diventare, se non è già diventata, sinonimo di 'arte italiana.'" Prampolini (23).

Alberto Savinio me parle de ses œuvres:

– Vous avez entre les mains mon *Hermaphrodite*. Ce n'est point mon seul livre. J'ai également écrit *La Maison inspirée*, *Angélique ou la Nuit de Mai*. Et des ballets: *Persée*, joué au Metropolitan Opera de New York en 1924; *La Mort de Niobé*, créé à Roma au théâtre de Pirandello. J'ai donné des concerts aux Soirées de Paris, j'ai collaboré à diverses revues françaises, tout dernièrement encore à *La Revue Nouvelle*. La France est, je vous l'ai dit, mon pays d'élection. (Lagarde)

## 2. The Kinship of Perseus and Medusa

In sum, pre-War references to the Metropolitan premiere originated from this interview, and any subsequent claims were either based on them or on the 1954 publication of Savinio's letter to Fiumi, which contains the same false statement. Both sources come directly from Savinio and are dated 1927. Now that the history of the false claim is outlined in its major nodes, there are only two possible explanations. Either Savinio was in good faith, or he was not: either he truly believed that Fokine had performed his *Persée* at the Metropolitan Opera in 1924, or he knowingly included a half-lie in his curriculum. Before drawing conclusions on the phantasmal New York performance, it is important to take into consideration what is known about the ballets that actually existed, whether on the score or the stage: the *Persée* that Savinio and Fokine wrote together in 1913, and the *Medusa* that Fokine staged and performed in 1924. Such reconstructions are possible through indirect but reputable sources. Michele Porzio, in the most comprehensive monograph on Savinio's music to date, describes *Persée* drawing on archival material from the Gabinetto Vissieux in Florence, where most of Savinio's papers have been collected and catalogued. Descriptions of the *Medusa* that premiered in New York in 1924 are available in the newspapers and magazine of the time, clipped and collected in Fokine's artistic estate. Along with other archival materials related to the choreographer's American ballets, these firsthand testimonies are available both at Harvard's Houghton Library and at the New York Public Library.

Within the span of three acts, Alberto Savinio's *Persée* follows its titular hero through two adventures and their residuum. The first act, entitled *La Medusa*, opens with a pre-Gorgonite Medusa playing with the other *fanciulle* by the ocean; in a sudden diegetic twist, the god of the Sea Poseidon emerges from the waters and rapes her at the Temple of Athena. The violation of the sanctity of the altar enrages the goddess, who curses Medusa into her snake-headed form, and

the scene concludes with the newly-formed monster turning several warriors sent to kill her to stone. The second scene provides more of an exploration of Medusa's still-intact humanity, sharing a glimpse of the monster in her isolated despair, a scene which Savinio described in his notes as, "Medusa, nel fondo della sua caverna, fa dei movimenti che tradiscono la sua sofferenza" (Porzio 73). As Porzio notes, "La donna si cela ancora nel mostro" (72). Perseus then arrives, and it is in the reflection of his shield that Medusa finally acknowledges her own monstrosity and falls to the floor in a violent stupor, defeated. The second act, entitled *Andromeda*, begins with the wedding procession of the eponymous princess and her uncle Phineas. Mirroring the tonal structure of the first act, the festive timbre soon gives way to a darker one, as preparations are suddenly underway to sacrifice Andromeda to the sea monster Cetus, as advised to the King and Queen by an oracle. Perseus, again, arrives in the second scene, successfully fighting the monster. He and Andromeda are to be wed, yet the tragedy of Medusa still resonates through all the joviality; as Porzio notes: "il solenne tema di Posidone" returns, "forse un'eco nostalgica e pietosa sulla sorte di Medusa [ . . . ]" (74). The third and final act, quite long compared to the others, takes place at the Palace of the King of Aethiopia, celebrating the nuptials of the newlyweds, and is more interested in choreography than dramaturgy.

Fokine's *Medusa*, in comparison, is much shorter. Diegetically, it closely follows the plot of *La Medusa*, the first act of the *Persée*, focusing on the drama of the titular character. With Michel and Vera Fokine originating the roles of Perseus and Medusa respectively (Figures 3 and 4), *Medusa* begins, too, with the titular character playing with her friends by the water, when Poseidon emerges with his underwater court upon the strand. Tellingly, many reviewers seized upon this moment as one of the most striking in the production:

Poseidon came up out of the sea, accompanied by a whole regiment of his undersea dogs and darlings – it was a magnificent moment, this one of their surge up the golden beach – and straightway robbed the young priestess of her membership in the temple troupe. ("Fokine, Fokina")

Absorbing as much of the detail is, the highest point of beauty was reached when Poseidon arose out of the sea, accompanied by the nymphs, on his way to woo the still innocent Medusa. Young dancers surged forward and backward, giving a vivid impression of the rise and fall of the sea, which was not surpassed during the remainder of the long program. ("From Russia")

This latter detail strongly connects *Medusa* with *Persée*. Porzio describes a very similar scene in the latter, in which "i corpi degli



Figure 3. Michel Fokine as Perseus in photomanipulated publicity photograph. “Ready for Premiere of New Ballet.” *New York Herald* (February 22, 1924). Photograph © 2020 Houghton Library, Harvard Theatre Collection, Cambridge (MA).

umani e delle donne formano una sorta di vortice umano [ . . . ] e il movimento aumenta sempre” (72). The peculiar, non-human characters of the waves, present in both ballets, represent an original dramatic elaboration from the classical source, and what may be a costume sketch of these dancers is listed as an unidentified preparatory design in Fokine’s estate (Figure 5). Indeed, several reviewers



Figure 4. Vera Fokina as Medusa in photomanipulated publicity photograph. “M.me Fokina at the Metropolitan.” *New York City Telegram* (February 24, 1924). Photograph © 2020 Houghton Library, Harvard Theatre Collection, Cambridge (MA).

commented on the production’s reliance on “the classic influence of the Italian Renaissance and particularly of the painter Botticelli,” the costumes “fashioned of pastel colored silks, draped to the figure” (*New York City Telegram*). Just as in *Persée*, shortly after the scene by the Temple of Athena, the goddess curses Medusa, who embarks on her reign of terror until Perseus arrives and kills her.

A crucial difference between *Persée* and *Medusa* is the music. Confirming what the scholarship on Fokine invariably affirms, the press coverage of the ballet’s premiere is unanimous in their assertion, both in the weeks leading up and the days afterwards, that the performance



Figure 5. Michel Fokine, Unidentified preparatory sketch, undated, watercolor, pencil and ink, Michel Fokine Papers in the Harvard Theatre Collection, Cambridge (MA). © Michel Fokine. Photograph © 2020 Houghton Library, Harvard Theatre Collection, Cambridge (MA).

was set to a rearrangement of Tchaikovsky's *Symphonie Pathétique*.<sup>24</sup> The music composed by Savinio for the *Persée* was evidently not used at

<sup>24</sup>The greater interest centred in the young American dancers who appeared in a major ballet, retelling the tragic story of Medusa from Greek mythology to the music of Tchaikowsky's famous 'Symphonie Pathetique.' That great work has been abridged somewhat and transposed to some extent, with the result that it makes an admirable interpretive voice accompanying the story of Medusa and her baleful influence which Perseus finally overcame by superior wisdom taught him by the gods.' ("From Russia").



all. Porzio himself notes the obvious influence of Igor Stravinsky in the tonal juxtaposition of Savinio's score, which is a far cry from the melodic, self-contained strains of Tchaikovsky. It is worth mentioning that Stravinsky—whose *Le Sacre du printemps* had premiered with the Ballets Russes at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in 1913, the very same year Savinio and Fokine collaborated in Paris—affected every aspect of the ballet: the scenic organization of the two opening episodes of *Le Sacre* (*Les Augures printaniers* and *Jeu du rapt*), Porzio goes so far to suggest, were directly lifted and transposed by Fokine to *Persée*. While many of the reviews dedicated virtually none of their word counts to considerations of the implications of choice of music, one of the most widely circulated Italian-American publications at the time, *Il Progresso Italo-Americano*,<sup>25</sup> did, commending its use of Tchaikovsky. Interestingly, however, much of this review is dedicated to the perceived “massacro” of “il mastodontico ballo classico italiano” by the more popular, more artistically aware modern Russian tradition (“Teatri ed Arte”). Indeed, judging by the press surrounding the event, the perception of the dance form as an inherently *un-American* national enterprise seemed widely held, the *New York Tribune* going so far in one article on Fokine to trace the lineage of the ballet so as to emphasize its French and Italian roots (“Fokine and Ruth”).

The description of the production as the first “ballet-tragedy” of its kind (“Fokines Present ‘Medusa’”) suggests another original idea that might have been inherited by the 1924 New York production from the 1913 Parisian composition, as it reflects a certain take on the Ovidian episode mirrored, too, in *Persée*. As Porzio notes, “in ogni caso la metamorfosi consegue al passaggio nel mondo dell’oscurità e degli abissi marini, mentre in *Persée* la mostruosa trasformazione colpisce una figura totalmente umanizzata” (72). This interpretation of Medusa as a deeper, more tragic character might have been conceived to exalt Vera Fokina’s dramatic qualities, and was surely successful, the ballet being perceived as a novelty in every sense by the New York press (Figure 6).

And given the amount of coverage that the production received in the society pages of New York, it seems not unlikely that news of it (and of its plot and music) would have reached Savinio in Europe. In retrospect, it is safe to conclude that *Medusa* borrowed heavily from *Persée*, though was not a staging of it as Savinio stated in his

<sup>25</sup>On *Il Progresso Italo-Americano*, see Bertellini.



Figure 6. “All-American Ballet in Medusa: Michel Fokine to Offer Novelty at Metropolitan Opera House” and “To Dance with Fokine’s New Ballet.” *New York City Journal* (February 13, 1924). Photograph © 2020 Houghton Library, Harvard Theatre Collection, Cambridge (MA).

curriculum vitae.<sup>26</sup> How, then, did the transformation of a modernist Ovidian reimagining, set to a distinctly Savinian, Metaphysical score, into its redacted sibling, set instead to the romantic strains of Tchaikovsky, become the “broken telephone game” it appears to us today? Indeed, this phenomenon of parroted news is gestured towards

<sup>26</sup>As Lynn Garafola notes, much of Fokine’s work for the Ballets Russes consisted of “[filling] out a concept developed by Diaghilev’s inner court,” rather than wholly originating the work himself; it seems plausible, then, that he made use of the same process for his American premiere (45).

more broadly by the New York press leading up to the premiere of *Medusa*, as the Fokine Papers at Harvard's Houghton Library would attest, each (reprinted) blurb emphasizing, ironically, the "first-ness," the originality of the conceit, all the while resulting themselves in a ba-ba-babble of retrospective inaccuracy:

Together, in their first public appearance in this country in three years, Michel Fokine, famous Russian master of the dance, and his wife, Vera Fokina, are to be seen at the Metropolitan Opera House Tuesday night surrounded by their own American ballet and presenting for the first time on any stage two new ballets in a program that will be as entirely new as it is altogether attractive.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to this noteworthy joint appearance of the two famous dancers, and the first presentation of this Greek myth as a ballet, comes the news that on this occasion Fokine will use for the first time the all-American ballet on which he has been at work for several years.<sup>28</sup>

This kind of coverage is evidently based on press-releases that were carefully prepared by the production, and can be read as echoes of Fokine's own presentation of his supposedly new ballet. Of course, it was possible to claim the novelty of *Medusa*, having been the first dramatization of the Ovidian episode through ballet (to see the light of day), Serge Diaghilev's Paris-based Ballet Russes having only performed two other such Ovidian episodes beforehand: the 1911 *Narcisse*, which premiered at the Théâtre de Monte-Carlo and was a last-minute replacement for the originally-planned *Daphnis et Chloé*, and the 1914 *Midas*, which premiered at l'Opéra de Paris.<sup>29</sup> Both ballets, much like the *Persée*, it should be noted, emerged partly out of a Parisian avant-garde—as Fokine's presence at Apollinaire's *soirées* would attest, the French poet was a great patron of the Ballet Russes, reviewing many of their performances and even having introduced Savinio and Fokine (see Bohn 49)—that was particularly interested in the resurgent mythopoetic potential of Ovidian mythologies. The next dramatization of note of Ovid would not come until a near quarter-century later, in the form of Stravinsky's *Orpheus*.

In spite of this contextual thread, the choice of Perseus, however, is distinctly Savinian—a mere skim of Savinio's bibliography, consisting of mutant modernizations of the *Metamorphoses*, here most notably

<sup>27</sup>The same blurb is reprinted in the following: 'Fokine Ballet on Tuesday: Two New Pantomimes to Be Danced, With American Girls Assisting,' newspaper unknown. "New Ballets"; "Fokine's Ballet"; "Fokine Ballet at Metropolitan."

<sup>28</sup>The same blurb is reprinted in the following: "American Ballet"; "Fokine and Fokina."

<sup>29</sup>On the production history of the Ballet Russes, see Shead.

manifested by his *La Morte di Niobe* of the same year, would attest to the statement's veracity. Indeed, this was a story that would preoccupy Savinio for years to come: the publication of his *Tragedia dell'infanzia* (1937) would see a reimagining of the encounter between Perseus, now a young boy named Nivasio Dolcemare, and Andromeda, now the figurehead of a boat, in the section entitled *La voce del drago* (previously published autonomously in 1922). Savinio, however, recalibrates the dynamic between the two, shifting it from one of sexual desire and possession to a fraternal attempt to empathize with the statue, a choice that seems to have been evoked, prior, in the unexpected interpretation of Medusa in *Persée* as a sympathetic character.<sup>30</sup> While this is not to say that the *soggetto* of the ballet was necessarily exclusively Savinio's, not Fokine's, creation, it seems that, given the latter's much-anticipated transition to the American stage vis-à-vis the premiere of his American Ballet—the culmination of three years of training—there was much at stake that necessitated the inclusion of something “novel,” particularly as *Medusa* was performed alongside by-then already familiar works, including *Capriccio Espagnol*, *The Dying Swan*, and *Le Rêve de la Marquise*. As several publications noted in their coverage:

It [had] long been the ambition of this former director of the Imperial Theatre ballet of Petrograd to establish in this country a dancing organization that would have all of the tradition, the atmosphere and the background of the ballet Russe, but at the same time in personnel being entirely American.<sup>31</sup>

Of course, the role of media themselves is not to be dismissed here: it seems that, in a culture obsessed with origins and originality, Fokine's *Medusa* was packaged and sold by New York's emergent fast news and press clippings industry as a performance of first's, itself predicated on the myth of an author to whom the question of origins is central. In a press preview of Fokine's company, the *New York Tribune* framed its inception within the narrative of a race to create the first authentically American ballet: the American-born Ruth St. Denis' Hopi-inspired “all-American ballet,” consisting solely of American dancers and American composers, versus the recent Russian import Michel Fokine's “all-American ballet,” consisting also of only American dancers but borrowing its music from continental composers. Regardless of Fokine's intent, it seemed he could not

<sup>30</sup>On impossible classicisms, see Giammei.

<sup>31</sup>This blurb was reprinted in the following: “American Ballet”; “New Ballets”; “Fokine Ballet at Metropolitan”; “Fokines Present ‘Medusa’”.

evade the associations of global modernism that followed him in the New York press, the *New York Evening Mail* heralding his production under the title, “Continental Art Which Has Filtered Through Paris to New York” (“Fokine and Ruth”).

### 3. Conclusions: Modern Self-Fashioning

Documents and archival material strongly suggest that *Medusa*, the ballet that premiered at the Metropolitan Opera in 1924 starring Vera and Michel Fokine along with their new American Ballet ensemble, was a version of the first act of *Persée*, the ballet that Savinio and Fokine had written in 1913 in Paris drawing on an original take on Ovid’s myth. The evidence discussed in the previous two sections of this essay suggest that Fokine fashioned the New York premiere as a fresh start, as a novelty, as the first step in his American reformation of ballet. On the other hand, Savinio fashioned it as evidence of his past success, of his background as an *enfant prodige*, of his international relevance. In the absence of a Savinio-Fokine epistolary, some aspects of this story remain unresolved. There is no way to determine how Savinio knew of the New York production of *Medusa*, for instance (did Fokine contact him? did he read about it on the papers?), or whether he genuinely thought it was staged to his music. There is no way to establish if Fokine knew that Savinio was informed about the production of *Medusa*, or that he claimed it as a staging of his *Persée*. What is certain is that Fokine never mentioned publicly any link between Savinio and *Medusa*, and that Savinio invariably described *Medusa* as a premiere of his *Persée*. Their two versions of the truth (of the facts thus far recollected), could be consequences of misunderstanding or miscommunication. More likely, they respond to diverging strategies of self-representation, in turn influenced by contextual pressures and the need for adaptation. Therefore, they reveal something about how an artist could build their own persona in the machine age—in the age of clipping bureaus, industrialized cultural information, “Who’s Who” reference publications, and diplomatic tensions over an artist’s statement to the press. This is the perspective adopted for these conclusions. In 1980 Stephen Greenblatt introduced the concept of “Renaissance self-fashioning” to approach the birth of modern identity from the point of view of what he called “a *poetics of culture*” (5). His groundbreaking take on behavior and art, humanity and humanism, offers a good frame to discuss the *Medusa/Persée* affair, at the opposite chronological end of what we call Modernity, as a meaningful episode of cultural history.

Having been a renowned polymath and a successful reviver of Roman and Greek classics in avant-garde literature, art, and music, Savinio was hailed as the very paragon of a Renaissance man since the beginning of his artistic career.<sup>32</sup> It is perhaps less known that Fokine cultivated many talents as well: he painted, composed and performed music, wrote theoretical texts in three languages, and openly drew from ancient and early-modern visual sources (from Greek vases to Egyptian murals to Renaissance sculpture) for his choreographies. However, their artistic identities (and their poetics) were close to the Renaissance mostly in their paradoxical ability to maintain an innovative intention while looking at the past, to be classical in a modern way. Savinio mobilized antiquity and the Renaissance without ever becoming a *passéist* or, in the interwar period, adhering to fascist aesthetics—a risk that some of his closest contemporaries, like Bontempelli or Sironi, did not avoid. Fokine, a radical reformer who advocated for the importance of tradition, brought Perseus and Medusa on the scene in New York exactly when John Sargent was depicting the same subject on the grandiloquent walls of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston: “yet it is only Fokine who is heralded as an innovator” and “no one thought to consider [Sargent’s] classical murals as representative of modern ideas” (Dini 21) (Figure 7).

Both Fokine and Savinio, like the early modern writers studied by Greenblatt, were born middle-class: the son of a merchant and the son of an engineer. Both reached international fame and success relatively early, both were professional artists who lived off their art. Above all, both had to deal, after their French interlude, with shifting authorities—Imperial Russia and the American cultural market for Fokine, Italy from democracy to fascism (and back) for Savinio—and their correlated shifting artistic paradigms—from vanguardist modernism to the return to order. What makes their intertwined story relevant for late-modern self-fashioning is the fact that it takes place exactly in a liminal time, both in terms of history and of personal biography.

Throughout the decade that separates their collaboration on *Persée* and the debut of *Medusa*, both Savinio and Fokine’s art changed. Savinio’s unique take on the *rappel à l’ordre* that followed the Great War emerges clearly from the reconstruction of his negotiation between the Parisian avant-garde origins of his fame and the Italian literary career that he pursued in Ferrara and Rome; Fokine’s divergent destiny was

<sup>32</sup>Apollinaire for instance wrote ‘M. Savinio, qui est poète, peintre et dramaturge, ressemble en cela aux génies multiformes de la Renaissance toscane’ (Apollinaire “Musique Nouvelle”).





Figure 7. John Singer Sargent, *Perseus on Pegasus Slaying Medusa*, 1922-25, oil on canvas, 347.98 × 317.5 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. © John Singer Sargent. Photograph © 2020 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

more deeply linked to the progressive acclimation of Russian ballet in the West. To be sure, Savinio's interest in multimedia and collaborative theatrical productions based on music faded when he left Paris. In later years, penning a note to his 1944 illustrated edition of Lucian's *Dialogues of the Gods* for the publisher Bompiani, he described one of the most important sections of the ancient text, *The judgement of the goddesses*, as "libretti di ballo" (Lucian). He stated that many other Latin authors who wrote during liminal times, such as Apuleius and Lucan, also wrote ballet librettos that shared Lucian's "carattere di



‘fine civiltà,’” and connected such an apocalyptic zeitgeist to his own times. He swiftly traced the evolution of performative arts from tragedy to melodrama to operetta to theatrical dance: a progression that culminated with the Russian Ballets that, in 1913, were part of his own artistic agenda. The *terminus ante quem* that, in retrospect, he identified for a credible, wholehearted attempt to be modern through ballet is the beginning of World War I. The first bomb ended the vanguardist potential of Diaghilev’s innovation, starting an age of mere mannerism:

[ . . . ] l’ultima espressione di quella civiltà che morì sotto la prima cannonata del 1914 furono i Balletti Russi di Sergio Diaghilev. Nulla è nato di poi che sia voce nel teatro dei tempi che viviamo e quello che dice, quello che canta, quello che suona il teatro è ancora, e soprattutto per opera dei registi, questi uomini «nuovi», una parafrasi dei balletti di Diaghilev, nel caso migliore una ballata.

It is interesting that, along the palingenesis imposed by the War, Savinio blamed the dawn of the figure of the director for the exhaustion of novelty in performative musical theatre from 1914 on. His collaboration with Fokine on *Persée* took place exactly on the verge of this radical change, at the very end of an age that he perceived as more inventive, synergetic, and chaotically spontaneous—after all, inspired by the 1913 premiere of Stravinsky’s *Sacre*, he signed his ballet music as “Albert Savinio artisan dionysiaque” (Savinio *Hermaphrodito* L). 1913 is also the year in which, writing in French in the *Daily-Mail*, Marinetti launched the Futurist Manifesto of the Music-Hall, which celebrated anti-realistic, electrical, collective experiments of proto-happening theatre. Savinio’s idea of “musique sincériste,” as well as the *Chants de la mi-mort* that would later constitute the germ of *Hermaphrodito*, were both informed by this euphoric moment when they appeared in Apollinaire’s *Soirées* in 1914. To describe the clash of movements (from Futurism to Cubism) and forms of art that animated proto-Surrealist products of this brief spell, such as the ballet *Parade* that Cocteau started writing in 1914, Nancy Hargrove coined the term “Synergism of Influence” (83). If completed and fully produced, *Persée* would have joined these seminal avant-garde theatrical projects (which included re-conceptions of Ovid’s myths, such as Apollinaire’s 1914 *Les mamelles de Tirésias*) in building the foundations of what would later become French Surrealism. The war, however, separated Fokine and Savinio from each other and from Paris’ artistic milieu. When Fokine relaunched his career in America in 1924 (when the “fake news” analyzed in this paper had its origin in New York) Savinio was already an Italian writer and aesthetic theorist, and had to deal with a completely different political context.

As Savinio was ingratiating himself amongst the Parisian avant-garde throughout this prewar interval—thereby articulating the artistic identity that he had to re-fashion, as we saw, after the 1927 interview—Fokine’s aesthetic agenda was relatively conservative around 1913. His interest in Greco-Roman influences, at odds with the taste that Diaghilev was betting on, made him closer to Savinio’s and de Chirico’s Hellenic imagination, refined by their studies in Munich. Though Russian in title, the Ballets Russes found its greatest success across national lines. It is perhaps for this reason that Diaghilev began pushing in 1910 for the company to cater toward French audiences’ appreciation for exoticisms—overtly sensationalist works of Middle Eastern and Russian origin such as *Schéhérazade* and *Firebird*—as opposed to the ancient Greek themes that distinguished Fokine’s preferred repertoire. This disinterest proved to be a point of great contention within the Ballets Russes itself—Diaghilev’s eight-year postponement of *Daphnis et Chloë* is cited as the cause of Fokine’s eventual break with the company (see Garafola, 43). Of course, that Diaghilev’s desire for financial gain preempted Fokine’s exit is, in the context of the latter’s American period, deeply ironic. While a ballet on Perseus’ myth with experimental music by Savinio represented a clear alternative to the direction taken by the Ballets Russes, the spectacular 1924 revival of the same myth in New York fits what critics have described as a decline of Fokine’s artistic trajectory, overridden with commercial interests. “Music hall extravaganzas, one-night stands, movie prologues, a very occasional concert,” writes Lynn Garafola, the “saga of [Fokine’s] American career makes sorry reading” (44). If read through the lens of self-fashioning, the logic of this shift in Fokine’s poetics makes more sense. While in France productions more similar to the original *Perseus* idea could still be conceived in the Twenties (for instance Balanchine’s *Le Bal*, for which Diaghilev commissioned costumes to Giorgio de Chirico),<sup>33</sup> the contexts where Fokine and Sav-

<sup>33</sup>Five years after the premiere of Fokine’s American ballet, *Le Bal* was staged in Monaco. The similarities between *Le Bal* and the mythic Savinio-Fokine collaboration are few yet striking: though the resulting *Medusa* production followed the transformation of flesh to rock, *Le Bal* seemed preoccupied with what happened to these stony dancers afterwards. “One no longer knows in this vertigo,” wrote André George of the ballet in *Nouvelle littérature*, “if walls are fossilized dancers, or if the characters are not instead animated stones.” All the aspects of the production, from the costumes to choreography, seemed designed to evoke a defunct antiquity. Juliet Bellow interprets the production as a critique of what might be interpreted as Fokine’s particular legacy at the Ballets Russes, of the company’s supposed “classical turn” in the 1920s: “[disconnected] from its original context and significance, classicism lost its authority as the language of dance and became simply one amongst a panapoly” (217).

inio shaped their artistic personae in the interwar period demanded different poetics of culture.

New York and Rome, in 1924, were poles apart. The American city was hosting the first Democratic National Convention broadcast on radio, the one during which Franklin Delano Roosevelt came back to the political scene with his famous “Happy Warrior” speech. The Italian capital was hosting the first national election that Benito Mussolini’s fascist party won by a landslide, the one followed by the murder of Giacomo Matteotti and the progressive establishment of a totalitarian regime. In terms of context, Savinio’s and Fokine’s destinies couldn’t diverge more. When Savinio, in 1927, started talking about a New York premiere of his ballet, he was evading fascist Italy: he had moved back to Paris the year before, after more than a decade, and started painting with instant success. Both his letter to Fiumi and his interview with Lagarde should be read as elements of his attempt to fashion a cosmopolitan artistic profile, along with his project to self-translate his novel *Angelica o la notte di maggio* into French and his re-established contacts with the surrealists. In this perspective, claiming a staging of his ballet in New York by a Russian star was a crucial addition to his mostly French and Italian accomplishments. The striking reaction of the fascistized Italian culture to such a xenophile self-fashioning was the first of a series of clashes with the totalitarian authority that culminated ten years later, when Mussolini’s government shut down a weekly magazine because of one article by Savinio (on Leopardi and ice cream),<sup>34</sup> and a number of newspapers accused Savinio and his brother of being secretly Jewish.<sup>35</sup> The need to re-frame his intellectual persona into a less international and more recognizably traditional dimension could be the reason why, after the 1927 incident, Savinio seems to have never mentioned the Metropolitan premiere again. But of course it was too late: Formiggini’s *Chi è?* had already re-launched the information, followed by the *Enciclopedia Espasa* in Spain and by *L’Amour de l’Art* in French: the fake news was circulating, and never-really stopped.

Fokine’s situation was different: rather than underlying the Parisian origin of his ballet he had to minimize it, and to focus on its aspects of originality. His intention was to acclimate in America, to carve his space in the New York scene, and to sell tickets. To be credible, he

<sup>34</sup>On the episode, and in general on Savinio as a model for anti-fascist intellectuals, see Sciascia (182–184).

<sup>35</sup>On the de Chiricos’ connections with Jewish intellectuals, and on the repercussions of anti-semitism on their lives, see Jewell (162–190).

had to maintain a clear bond with the prestige of his continental provenance but, at the same time, to be perceived as a new protagonist of American performing arts rather than a mere importer of out-fashioned European trends. That is probably why he did not use Savinio's experimental music, falling back on the recognizable romanticism of Tchaikovsky's symphony and orienting the press' attention towards the (false) newness of his subject, of his humanized Medusa, of the new group of local dancers that he led. *Medusa's* origin in pre-war Paris, on the piano keys of an Italian *protégé* of Apollinaire, did not help his cause at all: the ballet was to be perceived as an invention of the New York years, not as an elaboration from his previous artistic phase.

The two manipulations of the facts could peacefully co-exist, and indeed they did. Up until now.

#### REFERENCES:

- "Nel concerto al conservatorio di Milano (2° dicembre)." *Musica d'oggi: Rassegna di vita e di cultura musicale*, vol 1, n. 12, 1919, p. 18.
- "Alberto Savinio." *I Rostri: Rassegna di vita forense*, vol. 3, n. 1, p. 64, 1932.
- "Alberto Savinio." *Amour de l'art* vol. 15, n. 4, p. 490, 1934.
- "American Ballet in Performance with the Fokines: 'Medusa' Will Be Presented at the Manhattan on February 26." *The New York Review*, 16 Feb. 1924.
- "Fokine and Fokina with Their American Ballet." *Brooklyn NY Citizen*, 17 Feb. 1924.
- "Fokine and Ruth St. Denis Teach Spirit of America: The Rival Leaders of the Barefoot Dance Announce Their Intentions for the New Ballet." *New York Tribune*, 3 Feb. 1924.
- "Fokine Ballet at Metropolitan." *New York City Commercial*, 23 Feb. 1924.
- "Fokine, Fokina and Their New American Ballet Here: Special Dance Performance at Metropolitan, With First Showing of 'Medusa,' Brings 60 on Stage and 60 in Pit." *NY Sun and Globe*, 27 Feb. 1924.
- "Fokine's Ballet at the Opera House." *New York City Telegram*, 24 Feb. 1924.
- "Fokines Present 'Medusa' a New Ballet-Tragedy: Russians With American Forces Produce Colorful Bill at Metropolitan." *New York Herald*, 27 Feb. 1924.
- "From Russia and Denmark: Continental Art Which Has Filtered Through Paris to New York." *New York Evening Telegram*, 17 Feb. 1924.
- "New Ballets By Fokine Offered Tuesday Night: 'Medusa' to Be Danced for First Time at Metropolitan." *New York City Review*, 23 Feb. 1924.
- "Teatri ed Arte." *Il Progresso Italo-Americano*, 27 Feb. 1924.
- Alexandrian, Sarane. *Surrealist Art*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1975.
- Apollinaire, Guillaume. "Dessin et Musique." *Paris-Journal*, 7 Jul. 1914.
- . "Musique Nouvelle." *Paris-Journal*, 21 May 1914.—. *Petites Flâneries d'art*, edited by Pierre Caizergues, MontPELLIER: Fata morgana, 1980.
- Beaumont, Cyril. *Michel Fokine and His Ballets*. London: C. W. Beaumont, 1935.
- Bellow, Juliet. *Modernism on Stage. The Ballets Russes and the Parisian Avant-Garde*. Abingdon: Ashgate, 2013.

- Bertellini, Giorgio. "Shipwrecked Spectators: Italy's Immigrants at the Movies in New York, 1906–1916." *The Velvet Light Trap*, vol. 44, 1999, pp. 39–53.
- Bohn, Willard. *Apollinaire and the Faceless Man: The Creation and Evolution of a Modern Motif*. London: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1991.
- Bontempelli, Massimo. *Opere scelte*, edited by Luigi Baldacci. Milan: Mondadori, 1978.
- Breton, André, ed. *Anthology of Black Humour*. 1940. Translated by Mark Polizzotti. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1997.
- Carrà, Carlo. "L'italianismo artistico e i suoi denigratori." *Il Selvaggio*, December 1927, p. 94.
- D'Amico, Silvio, ed. *Enciclopedia dello spettacolo*. Rome: Le Maschere, 1954.
- de Chirico, Giorgio. *Il meccanismo del pensiero*, edited by Maurizio Fagiolo dall'Arco. Turin: Einaudi, 1985.
- Dini, Jane. "The Artist as Choreographer: Sargent's Murals at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston." *American Art*, vol. 16, n. 3, 2002, pp. 10–29.
- Enciclopedia universal ilustrada Europeo-Americana Suplemento*. Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 2003.
- Enciclopedia universal ilustrada Europeo-Americana*. Bilbao, Madrid, Barcelona: Espasa Calpe, 1931.
- Fiumi, Lionello. "Un'autobiografia inedita di Savinio." *Realtà*, Nov.-Dec. 1954, pp. 3–4.
- Formigginì, Angelo Fortunato, ed. *Chi è? Dizionario degli italiani d'oggi*. Rome: Formigginì, 1928.
- Frabetti, Anna. "«L'Italie et Nous». Interviste francesi a scrittori italiani dell'epoca fascista." *Filologia e Critica*, vol. 1, 2000, pp. 69–94.
- Garafola, Lynn. *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes*. Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Giammei, Alessandro. "Stratigraphy of Andromeda: Giorgio de Chirico, Alberto Savinio, Origins, and Originality." *Modernism/modernity*, vol. 25, n. 1, 2018, pp. 21–43.
- Giolli, Raffaello. "De Chirico in ritardo." *Problemi d'arte attuale*, vol. 1, n. 5, 1927, p. 70.
- Giudici, Lorella. "Le interviste di Savinio e de Chirico su «Comœdia» 1927." *Metafisica*, vol. 14/16, 2016, pp. 331–333.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. *Renaissance Self-Fashioning from More to Shakespeare*. Chicago University Press, 1980.
- Gutiérrez, María Elena. *Alberto Savinio: lo psichismo delle forme*. Florence: Cadmo, 1999.
- Hargrove, Nancy. "The Great Parade: Cocteau, Picasso, Satie, Massine, Diaghilev—and T.S. Eliot." *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, vol. 31, n.1, 1998, pp. 83–106.
- Horowitz, Dawn Lille. *Michel Fokine*. Boston: Twayne, 1985.
- Italia, Paola. *Le carte di Alberto Savinio*. Florence: Polistampa, 1999.
- . *Il pellegrino appassionato. Savinio scrittore: 1915–1925*. Palermo: Sellerio, 2004.
- . "Savinio librettista. Orfeo vedovo," in Landolfi, Andrea and Mochi, Giovanna, eds., *Poeti all'opera. Sul libretto come genere letterario*. Rome: Aracne, 2013, pp. 89–97.
- Lucian of Samosata. *Dialoghi e saggi*. 1944. Translated by Luigi Settembrini. Edited, illustrated, and annotated by Alberto Savinio. Milan: Bompiani, 1983.
- Jewell, Keala. *The Art of Enigma: The de Chirico Brothers and the Politics of Modernism*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004.
- Lagarde, Pierre. "Monsieur Alberto Savinio est épris de littérature franco-italienne." *Comœdia*, 29 Nov. 1927.
- Oppo, Carlo Efsio. "Fuoriuscitismo artistico." *La Tribuna*, 20 Dec. 1927.
- Porzio, Michele. *Savinio musicista: Il suono metafisico*. Venice: Marsilio, 1988.

- Prampolini, Enrico. "La sala de *L'appel de l'Italie* alla XVII Biennale d'Arte di Venezia." *La Nouvelle Italie*, vol. 6, 22 Apr. 1930, p. 337.
- Rognoni, Luigi. "Itinerario musicale di Savinio", in Savinio, Alberto. *Scatola sonora*. Edited by Luigi Rognoni. Turin: Einaudi, pp. XVII–XXIII, 1977.
- Savinio, Alberto. *Operatic Lives*. 1942. Translated by John Shepley. Marlboro: Marlboro, 1988.
- . "Avventura delle parole." *Corriere della Sera*. 5 Feb. 1948.
- . "Orfeo vedovo. Opera in un atto." *Gli spettacoli dell'Anfiparnaso*. Rome: Anfiparnaso, 1950, pp. 1–58.
- . *Vie des fantômes*. Translated by André Pieyre de Mandiargues. Paris: Flammarion, 1965.
- . *Signor Dido*. 1978. Translated by Richard Pevear. Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2014.
- . "Einführung in ein merkurisches Leben." Translated by Richard Anders. *Schreibheft*, vol. 24, 1984, pp. 82–90.
- . *Hermaphrodito e altri romanzi*. Edited by Alessandro Tinterri. Milan: Adelphi, 1995.
- . *Casa la vita e altri racconti*. Edited by Alessandro Tinterri and Paola Italia. Milan: Adelphi, 1999.
- . *Dieci processi*. Edited by Gabriele Pedullà. Palermo: Sellerio, 2003.
- . *Scritti dispersi (1943–1952)*. Edited by Paola Italia. Milan: Adelphi, 2004.
- Sciascia, Leonardo. *Fine del carabiniere a cavallo (Saggi letterari 1955–1989)*. Edited by Paolo Squilacioti. Milan: Adelphi, 2016.
- Shead, Richard. *Ballet Russes*. New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1998.
- Tinterri, Alessandro. *Savinio e lo spettacolo*. Bologna: il Mulino, 1993.
- Valentino, Luca. *L'arte impura: percorsi e tematiche del teatro di Alberto Savinio*. Rome: Bulzoni, 1991.
- Vivarelli, Pia, ed. *Savinio. Catalogo generale*. Milan: Electa, 1997.
- , Marzio Pinottini, Ruggiero Savinio, eds. *Alberto Savinio: Comune di Milano, Milano, Palazzo Reale, giugno-luglio 1976*. Milan: Electa, 1976.