

**MR. SAVINIO IS IN LOVE WITH FRANCO-ITALIAN LITERATURE<sup>1</sup>**  
**(“COMŒDIA” 29 NOVEMBER 1927)**

*Friend...! Friend...! Your mouth is full  
of the comforting word  
first response to all my nostalgia....  
Friend!... Friend!... your hands are full  
of flowers with sweet poisons  
first draught for the all-fiery thirst.  
Friend!... Friend!... the baskets are full  
of bruised murderous fruit  
first harvest of all my ploughing.  
Then a long belch of joy was heard  
and the planet farted;  
The temple veil was wrung then fell in ashes.*

I could not resist the delicate pleasure of opening the article with these verses. They will show that Mr. Alberto Savinio did not linger much behind modernism in dada form when he collaborated with Guillaume Apollinaire on the *Soirées de Paris* and published his *Chants de la mi-mort*, which latter were a revelation for young future surrealists.

Mr. Alberto Savinio is not just passing through Paris. He lives here permanently. He arrived in 1911 but due to Italian mobilisation in 1915 he had to rejoin his regiment. As soon as the war was over he returned to Paris, “the only city where one can really live”.

He has an apartment furnished in discreet taste, enlivened by colours and canvases. Because if Alberto Savinio began as a literary man he subsequently became a painter, his talent endorsed by a recent Paris exhibition worthy of note.

Thirty-five years old, an energetic face behind large round spectacles, lips that are strangely thin and mobile. A brown jersey with a leather belt around it. He is seated in an armchair and as he speaks to me he strokes a young longhaired Briard herding dog.

“The very fact that I left the country to come and live in France is sufficient proof of what I think about intellectual Italy. It doesn’t interest me in the least. In my view Paris is the only possible city in the world, the only place where one can produce, where one feels encouraged, the only city where intelligence reigns hand in hand with the sense of art.

It was right here in France that I ventured on my first experiences in Guillaume Apollinaire’s magazine.

Ah! Apollinaire, what a man, and what an understanding spirit, new and equally open to everything! I remember... he got me to play the piano, because at that time I was a composer, made me play for hours and

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<sup>1</sup> English translation, interview by Pierre Lagarde in the column “L’Italie et nous”, “Comœdia”, Paris 29 November 1927.

hours until my inert fingers couldn't hit the keys ...”.

Mr. Savinio half-closes his eyes on his memories. He hasn't touched a piano in fifteen years. The harmonies he hears are now traced in colours. He is once more attentive when I talk to him about Italy:

“Contrary to what Mr. de Pisis states, the French influence has been felt for many centuries. But who could fail to be touched by such a rich and diverse influence? Ask people in summer not to feel the heat of the sun...”.

And tradition?

“Apart from the local traditions of each town there is a European, worldwide tradition to which I feel intimately bound, more than to Italian tradition.

By the way, you don't know Italy. Does that make you smile? So it's true. Will you quote d'Annunzio now? But d'Annunzio has never existed...”.

And Mr. Savinio adds, full of proud modesty:

“On the other hand, I've never read a line of his!”

So how can you judge him? But I let him continue.

“Will you also quote Pirandello? I don't like Pirandello much. He has hardly any importance now. And anyway he never had much in Italy. It's a case that must be judged psychologically with regard to Italians. They were so happy to see one of their writers taken seriously abroad, something that had never happened to anyone in modern literature.

At the moment Italy cannot show anything interesting from the intellectual viewpoint. A country with so many social and political worries cannot be dedicated to the arts.

Mussolini furthermore stated that he absolutely did not want an intellectual dictatorship. He personally detests those who want to impose as officially fascist a style full of long sentences and eloquence such as he himself had employed as a young journalist, when he imitated Papini”.

The conversation proceeded in curious arabesques which I could not wholly grasp. Did I say ‘Latin Bloc’? Mr. Savinio gives a start:

“Latin Bloc? It's just a joke! The rare Italians of value that you know, you got to know them without anything to do with Latin Bloc. The Latin Bloc doesn't exist. It's just a phrase”.

But Mr. Guido da Verona...

Mr. Alberto Savinio interrupts me:

“Mr. Guido da Verona in my opinion is poorly qualified to speak about this claimed Latin Bloc. He gives a lot of lectures but he doesn't know Italian any better than French, which doesn't prevent him from mixing the two...”.