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Psychoanalysis & the Films of Federico Fellini

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Fade in. Guido Anselmi, viewed from behind, sits alone in a car on a traffic-congested street. A man in the car in front of him looks back at Guido and at the camera itself. The camera pans over the roof of Guido's car, as if trying to find the cause of the traffic. In the car to his left sits Guido's own parents. There is a complete lack of recognizable sound as the cars idly sit and wait. Guido runs a handkerchief along the dashboard and across the windshield, attempting to clean a stain that isn't even there. A few lanes over, a group of people stand in a bus with their arms dangling out of the windows; their faces are obstructed. White smoke begins to billow out of the vents of Guido's car. It seems that the gaze of all of the surrounding drivers is focused on Guido, who begins to panic and tries to escape from the confinement of his automobile. The camera cuts to a shot of his mistress, Carla being disproportionately pleased by the touch of a stranger.

Guido, whose sighs and groans of anxiety can now be heard, claws at the clouded windows and attempts to kick his way through the glass. Eventually he finds his way out of the car by climbing through the sunroof. Arms outstretched, he begins to float now; over the traffic and into the sky. A passing shot of the structure that will be part of his next film is flung across the screen. Guido is traveling through the clouds when the focus shifts to two men on a beach. One man, atop a horse, calls to the other who looks to the sky and finds the floating Guido suspended in air. The two men will reappear later in the film as the actress Claudia's agent and press agent. The press agent begins to tug at a rope that is tied to Guido's leg. "Down, you come!" he exclaims as Guido falls from the sky and back towards the earth. The agent atop the horse sneers at the camera as he

mutters the words “Down for good.” Startled, Guido awakens from his sleep, signaling to the audience that the preceding sequence was in fact, a dream.

This scene, the opening to the film *8 ½*, is a perfect summation of the filmmaking style of Federico Fellini. It highlights the Italian director’s penchant for juxtaposing the real with the imaginary, or the surreal. The scene, which focuses on the psychological state of the character Guido, demonstrates Fellini’s ability to use film as a tool for examining the human psyche. He succeeds in creating scenery that is fantastic and ambiguous, yet real and strangely familiar, much like the mind itself. It should stand as no surprise that in his attempt to analyze the human condition, Fellini’s work is informed by psychoanalytic theory, especially that of Carl Gustav Jung.

Through reflection and the use of dream imagery, Fellini investigates the stages of human development and the essential elements of personality. By examining the progression of work across his entire oeuvre, one can witness a separate form of development emerge. Fellini’s work matures as he weaves in and out of personal introspection and national characterization. By the time *Amarcord* was released, Fellini had tackled issues ranging from creative frustration to personal maturation, marital infidelity to acceptance of responsibility and of course, the oppressive force of both the Catholic Church and Fascism.

In order to understand the work of Federico Fellini, one must know a bit about Federico Fellini, the man. Many of the events and characters in his movies are drawn from his own life. Yet, Fellini has repeatedly insisted that none of his films are pure autobiography. Fellini was born on January 20, 1920 in the small town of Rimini, Italy. It was his childhood memories of Rimini that would later inspire *Amarcord*. There is an

oft-repeated story about Fellini running away to join the circus at a young age. However, the story is misleading. In actuality, it was Fellini's brother who joined the circus and not Federico. During his youth he worked as a cartoonist and later enrolled in college to avoid being drafted to the army.

Fellini soon befriended Italian actor Aldo Fabrizi and the two formed a rather fruitful professional relationship. Together they wrote plays and acted. In the late 1930s, Fellini wrote sketches for the radio program *Cico e Pallina*. It was there that he met his future wife, Giulietta Masina. Around the same time, Fellini also worked as an artist on "fumetti", Italian illustrated magazines and comics.

Over the next decade, Fellini became more involved with film and began writing screenplays. In 1945 he worked alongside Roberto Rossellini on the film *Roma, Città Aperta* (*Rome, Open City*). The movie was hailed an instant classic and is considered to be a defining moment in the history of Italian cinema. *Roma, Città Aperta* was Fellini's first foray into the film movement known as Neo-Realism. Neo-Realism began in the years following World War II as an alternative to the glamorous, fantastic stories being exported out of Hollywood. The Neo-Realist filmmakers sought to inject realism into cinema by shooting in real-world, "on location" settings and by applying a documentary-like approach to their work. The films to come out of this era deal with everyday social issues and often provide gritty depictions of life on the streets of Italy.

Fellini's experiences working with some of the Neo-Realist greats would influence his early work, such as *The White Sheik* and *I Vitelloni*. In 1950, he filmed his first feature, *Variety Lights* alongside Alberto Lattuada. His biggest success would come ten years later with the release of *La Dolce Vita*. The film, about the glamorous life in

Rome, signaled a bit of a shift in the filmmaker's style. Though it was still a far cry from the fantasy of his later works, *La Dolce Vita* signaled a departure from the stark representation of Neo-Realism.

After *La Dolce Vita* became a hit, Fellini was left with a bit of confusion over what his next project would be. Three years later, that exact uncertainty would be the basis of perhaps his finest film, *8 1/2*. The movie, which concerns the creative and personal struggle of a director named Guido, displayed a noticeably different composition than his previous work. It introduced elements of dreams, memories and fantastic images and sounds. Fellini's work, and film in general, would never look or feel the same again. In 1965, Fellini continued this exploration of the extraordinary with his first color project, *Juliet of the Spirits*.

In 1967, after working on a script that would never be fully realized, Fellini suffered a nervous breakdown and spent a month staying in a nursing home. The following year, he returned to work producing a segment for the movie *Spirits of the Dead*. Over the next two decades, Fellini would create films that met with varying levels of success. In 1974, he released *Amarcord*, a film that would gain much critical praise as well as his fourth Academy Award. He continued his long career until his death on October 31, 1993.

The study of psychoanalysis originated with the writings of Sigmund Freud. Among other things, Freud's sub-field of psychology examines the influence of childhood memories that are often repressed and a portion of the mind that we are not aware of called the sub-conscious. He believed that through techniques such as free association, in which a person verbalizes everything that comes to mind, one could tap

into the unconscious and confront memories and issues that lie within. Another major focus of psychoanalysis is the role of dreams. According to Freud, dreams are the pathway to the sub-conscious. Unsatisfied wishes, obsessions and anxieties all make their presence known through dreams. Though they are often encoded in symbols, understanding dreams is a major step on the path towards awareness of the sub-conscious.

Another important influence on personality for Freud is sexuality. Freud wrote that all actions are dictated by drives, or impulses, whose roots are often grounded in sexuality. His concept of libido refers to the emotional and psychological energy that results from the biological drive of sexuality¹. Freud identifies two categories of drives: Eros and Thanatos. Eros refers to life impulses, those that “maintain life processes and ensure reproduction of the species. The key to these forces is the sexual drive, whose energy force is [the] libido².” Thanatos, on the other hand, reflects death impulses and is the source of aggressiveness.

The impact of psychoanalysis on the world of art has been very important. The movement known as surrealism, which began in the 1920s, is directly influenced by psychoanalytic theory regarding dreams. Film quickly became a major tool of the surrealists. Ironically, the form of art that guarantees the truest depiction of reality became the ideal venue for exploring dreams and the fantastic. Fellini was aware of all of this when he decided to shift his filmmaking style a bit with *8 1/2*. However, it wasn't the writings of Freud that he looked to for inspiration, but those of one of his contemporaries, Carl Gustav Jung.

¹ Engler (1999)

² Engler (1999)

Fellini was first introduced to the theories of Jung by an analyst friend, Ernst Bernhard, who lived nearby. He was immediately drawn to Jung's work regarding dreams and his treatment of symbols. Bernhard guided Fellini through his studies and encouraged him to keep a dream journal of his own. For Fellini, this journal served as a way to openly explore his creativity and to work out ideas that would occasionally appear in his films. His studies of Jung eventually brought him to visit the psychologist's hometown of Kesswil, Switzerland.

Carl Jung initially began working with Freud, but soon began developing his own school of thought. Though his theories are rooted in psychoanalysis, many introduce ideas that stray from the original intent of Freud. Jung's work is often met with controversy as it draws upon fields not normally associated with psychology, including religion, alchemy and the occult. However, his ideas are among some of the most important to come out of the study of psychology and have influenced a host of artists, writers and thinkers. Like Freud, Jung concerned himself with the unconscious and its effect on human drives and emotions, but he also introduced a new concept, the collective unconscious. According to Jung, there exists a portion of the unconscious that is shared by all people. Though individual's language and ways of expressing emotions may differ, the emotions themselves remain the same.

Within the collective unconscious lie images known as archetypes. These archetypes are universal thoughts or predispositions to respond to the world in certain ways³. Though they never fully enter consciousness, the archetypes appear in symbolic form through art, myths and dreams. Jung believed that it is important to understand these archetypes because they represent the latent potential of the psyche and our

³ Jung (1957)

individual potential to become part of a larger, universal experience. Further discussion of these archetypes will occur later, as they are central to understanding many of the themes in Fellini's films.

Fellini's interest in Jung was crucial to the development of his signature filmmaking style. Apparently, when faced with the daunting task of creating a follow-up to *La Dolce Vita*, Fellini began studying Jung and realized a new creative potential that resulted in the production of *8 ½*. To him, "dreams and fantasies represented a way of gaining access to an imaginative world of greater significance⁴", otherwise known as the collective unconscious. The symbols and archetypes contained in the collective unconscious provided Fellini with a new vocabulary of imagery that could be used to appeal to viewers on an emotional, rather than simply visual level. When asked about inspiration, both personal and in general, Fellini provided the following response:

"What do we mean by inspiration? The capacity for making direct contact between your unconscious and your rational mind. When an artist is happy and spontaneous, he is successful because he reaches the unconscious and translates it with a minimum of interference... The transformation from dream to film takes place in the awakened conscious state, and it's clear that consciousness involves intellectual presumption which detracts from creativity."⁵

This paper will examine the psychoanalytical themes present in four of Fellini's films: *I Vitelloni*, *8 ½*, *Juliet of the Spirits* and *Amarcord* in order to get a better grasp on the films as well as Fellini's style in general.

Often considered to be Fellini's first masterpiece, *I Vitelloni* (1953) was his third completed film and his first truly successful one. The film tells the story of five young

⁴ Bondanella (1992)

⁵ Bondanella (1990)

men living in an ocean-side town. The men, unemployed, spend their days wandering the streets and chasing women. They are rather immature and attempt to evade responsibility whenever possible. At the beginning of the film, one of the “Vitelloni”, Fausto, impregnates the sister of his friend, Moraldo. He attempts to leave town in order to escape his duty as a father, only to be forced into staying by his own father. The remainder of the film follows the Vitelloni as they pass the days doing little except spending time with one another. However unproductive, most of them seem rather content with their condition, except for perhaps Leopoldo, the playwright striving for fame. Towards the end of the film, Sandra, Fausto’s wife, takes off with their child and the Vitelloni go looking for them. In many ways, this sequence represents their own carelessness finally catching up with them. Sandra eventually returns home, but she has succeeded in exposing to the men their own general apathy.

The title of *I Vitelloni* literally translates to “large calves.” This emphasizes their state as grown, yet immature and not fully developed beings. The comparison of the men to cows accuses them of lethargy and listlessness. According to Ennio Flaiano, the term may stem from a corruption of the term “vudellone,” meaning “large gut” and signifies a “non-productive person prone to stuffing himself.”⁶ Fellini matches this notion with long, slow, tracking shots that give the film a sluggish progression.

Psychoanalytically speaking, the Vitelloni’s condition may stem from an under-developed sexuality. The fact that none of them can form significant, lasting relationships with women and only meet them for casual sexual encounters demonstrates the impulsiveness of their actions and the deficiencies of their personalities. It seems that each one would rather spend time with the group than form their own individual lives or

⁶ Bondanella (1992)

even a family. This “pack” mentality is probably another technique devised to escape personal responsibility, yet it reeks of homoeroticism. The single time homosexuality is brought up, when the actor Sergio Natali attempts to seduce Leopoldo on the beach, the character runs away frightened. It’s almost as if the Vitelloni view homosexuality the same way they envision maturation and marriage.

The five Vitelloni also seem to display a certain desire for regression. Their immaturity seems to coexist with a nostalgic affinity for childhood. According to Freud, a person regresses when he/she moves backwards in time to a stage that was less anxious and had fewer responsibilities.⁷ Fellini has included a number of images that allude to these concepts. First, the image of water is repeated a number of times. Water is a recognized symbol for the womb, and often represents regression. In one scene, Moraldo and Fausto take a drink from a fountain and call it “refreshing.” Also, the Vitelloni live in a town by the ocean, choosing to surround themselves with water constantly. Later in the film, Fausto enlists the help of Moraldo to steal a statue from the store at which he works. The two go around town with the village idiot, Guidizio, trying to sell it. Guidizio repeatedly shouts, “beautiful angel” and is later seen sitting alone with the statue admiring it. According to Christian belief, angels are souls who live eternally in the state of young boys. Guidizio appears to be almost jealous of the angel, repeating the Vitelloni’s attitude towards regression. It comes as no surprise that the play Sergio Natali comes to town to perform is titled *Reminiscence of Youth*.

The Vitelloni’s resistant ascendance into manhood can be seen throughout the entire film. When they decide to grow facial hair one summer, it is as if we are viewing boys pretending to be grown up. Once again, the decision is communal and not

⁷ Cooper (1989) and Valliant (1992)

indicative of any individual attempt to mature. Towards the end of the film the Vitelloni come across a group of workers on the road. Ironically, they taunt them for having jobs. The workers respond by attacking them, signaling that the responsibility they have been trying to avoid may finally be catching up with them. At the end of the film, Moraldo boards a train, finally leaving the town. At the station is a boy he had befriended named Guido. It's rather unclear whether Moraldo has finally matured and is on his way to begin a new life, or if this is just another childish, impulsive move which had not been thought through.

Throughout *I Vitelloni* a narrator occasionally chimes in and describes the action. His identity is never disclosed. He may be one of the men, most likely Moraldo in the future taking account of the events of his past. Or he may be Fellini himself, giving the director's own point of view of the characters he has created. This latter theory foreshadows the use of meta-cinematic techniques Fellini would make use of in later films.

Essentially a study of immature men, *I Vitelloni* explores what Fellini saw as a typical archetype of Italian males. However, the most disappointing feature of the film is his unwillingness to explore the cause of the Vitelloni's behavior. Fellini may be attributing this childishness to growing up in a small, town provincial area. He may also be accusing the Catholic Church or the Vitelloni's own mothers, the only women who seem to matter to the young men. Whatever the case may be, *I Vitelloni* represents a brief exploration into psychoanalytic themes early in Fellini's career when the filmmaker was still working in the style of neo-realism. The characteristics of the five Vitelloni

serve as a warning against the lazy, mother-dependent, Italian male archetype and show up a number of times in Fellini's other work.

In 1960, Fellini released a film that would catapult him to fame and make him a household name, *La Dolce Vita*. Initially met with controversy and banned, the film gained worldwide recognition and was hailed an instant classic. Faced with the pressure of creating a follow-up to the hit, Fellini was confused as to what his next project might be. The period that followed would be the one in which Fellini sought inspiration in the writings of Carl Jung. As previously mentioned, his interest in dreams and his own confusion led to the creation of perhaps his greatest film, *8 ½* (originally titled *La Bella Confusione* or "The Beautiful Confusion"). For Fellini, the inspiration to make *8 ½* "came after a period of lengthy self-examination." He writes, "I felt I needed to find the answers to countless questions... Thus, a journey into the inner self."⁸

8 ½ is the story of an established director, Guido Anselmi, and his struggle to create a new film. He decides that his latest venture will be a science-fiction picture. The film follows Guido as he figures out how to approach the project and begins working on casting and set design. Along the way, however, we are introduced to the characters that play a role in Guido's own life and discover that despite his professional status, he is actually an irresponsible man entangled in a number of troubled relationships. Through Fellini's use of dreams and flashbacks, we are brought into the psyche of Guido and guided along his decision to change. When the pressure becomes too much for him, Guido decides to scrap the science-fiction film and make amends with those around him in an incredible, unforgettable finale.

⁸ Alpert (1986)

8 ½ opens with the scene described earlier, in which the character Guido struggles to get out of his smoke-filled car and finds himself soaring through the air. The scene emphasizes Guido's anxieties, both creative and personal. Guido feels the pressure of creating a hit movie and finds himself at somewhat of a creative drought. When he is pulled back down to Earth by the press agent on the beach, the mechanisms of film are bringing him back to reality. The comparisons to Fellini himself are more than obvious. *8 ½* marks the director's full foray into meta-cinema, a technique that makes the viewer aware that he/she is in fact watching a film. Fellini uses Guido to reference the medium of film itself and to question its reality as it is projected upon the screen. As if to ensure the comparison between Guido and Fellini, Marcello Mastroianni, the actor who portrays Guido, borrowed Fellini's hat for the film and is seen wearing it in several scenes.

Fellini's experiments with meta-cinema are an effort to understand himself as much as the medium of film. It is very possible that his decision to work in such a manner was influenced by Jung's writings regarding synchronicity. According to Jung, synchronicity involves events that occur around the same time and seem to be linked by meaning. They often appear as coincidences, but in fact are linked by the influence of the collective unconscious. Understanding these synchronistic events and their manifestation in the physical world can lead to self-realization. Though the events in Fellini's films are the product of the director's imagination, and not truly coincidences, they relate to events in his life and reflect an attempt to understand his own unconscious. So, the struggle Fellini felt in writing a new movie is repeated in the character of Guido, linking him to the artist's own life and tapping into the collective unconscious by indirectly connecting Fellini to the viewer through the experiences of Guido.

8 ½ also introduces Fellini style of interrupting the narrative to introduce a dream sequence. As the opening scene ends, we see Guido lying in bed, signaling that it was in fact a dream and alerting us that dreams will play an important role in the structure of the film. The placement of the dream sequences alongside scenes of reality obstructs the action in order to allow periods of reflection. The scenes hint at the psychological state of Guido and as Freud wrote, give us a pathway into his sub-conscious. The opening of the film hints at Guido's unconscious creative and sexual anxieties (as evidenced by the presence of his mistress being pleased by another man) as well as introduces his inability to take responsibility for his life.

The overall narrative structure of *8 ½* is a rather loose one. Related sequences are strung together in a fashion that represents a sort of stream of consciousness narrative. Thus, dreams can easily co-exist with reality. This idea relates to Freud's techniques of introspection, most notably free association. In this manner, the film becomes a reflection; Guido's self-guided retrospective through his self-realization and ultimately, desire to change.

Much like the five young men in *I Vitelloni*, Guido is plagued by a certain self-imposed helplessness. He doesn't want to deal with the pressure of his producers and tries to ignore the fact that he is having an affair. This evasion of responsibility is due to an immaturity much like that of those five lazy souls who drifted through the streets of their ocean-side town. However, in Guido's case, this irresponsibility is much less overt. It is most likely derived from an under-developed sexuality and what Jung would describe as an unrealized "self", a disconnect between different aspects of the personality.

One of the more important aspects of *8 ½*, and probably the main reason for Guido's anxiety, is his relationship with women. It can be said that Guido has an inability to view women as anything but motherly or whorish. Though he is married, he has an affair and feels little guilt for it. In one scene, when his wife Luisa and mistress Carla meet, Guido naively hopes that the two will get along and that he won't have to feel guilty for his actions. In another sequence, Guido lies in bed with Carla. They begin to role-play a bit and Guido "directs" her to act like a whore. This image supports his feeling of women as whores and equates the control he tries to have in his professional life with that of his love life.

Guido's attitudes towards women are probably best explained through a childhood memory of an encounter with a local prostitute called La Saraghina. A young Guido, along with some friends, visits Saraghina and pays her to dance for them. They are soon discovered and Guido is sent to a priest to be punished. Here, Fellini follows a scene of free sexual expression with one of sexual repression. The priest, and so the Catholic Church, condemns Guido's actions and punishes him. This prohibition of sexuality no doubt shaped the adult Guido's view of women. The idea of the Church, or any institution for that matter, as an obstruction to sexual development and personal growth comes up often in Fellini's films and will be discussed in greater detail later.

Guido's under-developed sexuality is probably responsible for most of his ill-fated relationships with women. In an early dream sequence set among ancient Roman ruins, Guido buries his father and passionately kisses his mother. This is an obvious reference to the Oedipus complex, made famous by Freud. In yet another childhood memory, Guido is bathed and dressed by his aunts. The memory is presented as a

nostalgic desire to revisit the security of his youth, when the women in his life were protective and catered to his every need. This, along with the Oedipal dream, represents Guido's sexuality in an arrested state of development. Another important insight comes out of the aforementioned childhood memory. Guido and the other children play a word game, similar to pig Latin, in which nonsense syllables are added to a word. They spell out the words "ASA NISI MASA." When the words are put back into their normal context they spell "anima," the Italian word for "soul." Yet the word anima has another significance, it relates to a Jungian concept of the psyche. In describing the forces that make up the psyche, Jung identifies two features: the animus and the anima. For females, the animus represents the masculine side of the psyche, while the anima represents the feminine side of the male psyche. The anima or animus assists us in relating to and understanding the opposite sex. The implication here is that Guido is not in touch with his anima and thus does not fully understand women. According to Jung, those who do not accept the anima/animus qualities allow the traits of the other sex to remain unconscious and undeveloped and can never achieve full self-realization.⁹

A further exploration of Guido's relationship with the women in his life, and a key turning point in the film, comes in the form of a dream often referred to as a harem sequence. In the dream, all of the women in Guido's life appear in his childhood home, the setting of the earlier flashback involving his aunts and the utterance of "ASA NISI MASA." Guido comes home with presents for the women, who are all delighted to see home and dance around him as if worshipping some pagan god. They make comments that they are there to please him and cater to his every need. His wife, Carla appears and presents him with a young girl.

⁹ Engler (1999)

The women proceed to bathe Guido, again recalling the earlier childhood memory. This may represent a desire to regain the security of his childhood, a time when the women around him really did satisfy his needs and regale him with constant compliments. The image of Guido submerged in the vat of water recalls the symbolism of the womb discussed earlier. The bath, which can be compared to a baptism, may also represent Guido's wish to cleanse himself of the sins he has committed with and against these women. After the bath, he is wrapped in blankets and carried away. A call from upstairs is heard. It is of Jacqueline, a dancer and one of Guido's earlier love interests. She has been banished "upstairs" because she is too old and groans about Guido's "rules" that the women must follow. Jacqueline has been exiled to Guido's sub-conscious because she no longer serves a function to him.

The women hear Jacqueline's cries and soon begin to turn on him. Among other things, they criticize his love-making ability. In an effort to regain some control, Guido brandishes a whip and attempts to satiate the women, beginning with Saraghina. As he continues to strike the women, they squeal with pleasure. The sexual implications of the whip are obvious. Luisa tells the others that her husband can do "exactly as he pleases." The women in the dream are products of Guido's imagination and so represent aspects of his own anima. Jung wrote that since the anima/animus is a product of a single sex's projection of characteristics upon the other, it is often incomplete. Thus, the women in the dream are a perverted image of females; a product of Guido's distorted and not fully developed feminine traits.

Taken as a whole, the harem fantasy is a turning point in the film and ultimately, Guido's life. From a Freudian perspective, $8 \frac{1}{2}$ can be seen as divided into two parts: the

first representing the id, or pleasure principle and the second representing the ego, or reality principle. According to Freud, the id is the portion of personality responsible for the drive to satisfy basic life needs. However, the id is free and operates on impulses and without consideration for others.¹⁰ So, Guido's actions up to the fantasy represented an impulsive need to satisfy his urges. He had affairs, showed little respect for his wife and immaturely handled his career. After the fantasy, however, perhaps out of realization of its absurdity, he began to be influenced by his ego. Freud writes that the ego understands that others also have needs and that sometimes acting on impulses alone can be hurtful. The ego attempts to meet the needs of the id, but takes into consideration the reality of the situation. The Guido depicted later in the film, is a different man than the one shown at the beginning. He begins to acknowledge the feelings of those around him, especially his wife, and starts to see the consequences of his actions. In the final scene, he brings everyone he knows together in an attempt to take account of his entire life.

The finale of *8 1/2* takes place on the set of Guido's science-fiction film. All of the major characters of the film are present as he decides to abandon the project. What follows is a spectacular sequence in which he directs the people in his life to walk down the structure built for the film and line up in a circle. The distinction between his professional life and his personal one has been destroyed, in other words, a fusion of fantasy and reality has been established. Guido has progressed to the point at which he no longer relies on fantasy for comfort and can effectively deal with the responsibilities of reality. He has realized that accepting himself as well as others may be the key to all of his problems. If the first half of the film represents Guido's id and the second

¹⁰ Freud (1923)

represents the ego, then this scene surely represents the super-ego, the conscience that develops from the observation of moral and ethical guidelines.

The journey into the self that Fellini described as the inspiration for *8 ½* is ultimately resolved in the character of Guido. The outcome of the film represents the beneficial results of a creative struggle, just like the film itself does for Fellini's own struggle. The overall dream-like tone of the film acknowledges the fact that it is a product of fantasy after all, yet owes its influence to the objective reality of Fellini's life.

In 1965 Fellini completed his next film, *Juliet of the Spirits*. *Juliet* follows the inner journey of a woman in a troubled marriage and has often been called "8 ½ told from the point of view of a woman."¹¹ Throughout the film Juliet is visited by "spirits" which take the form of memories, dreams or characters that show up in her life. After learning that her husband is cheating on her, Juliet becomes increasingly concerned for her marriage and is forced to deal with a host of inner demons. Along her path to self-discovery she encounters strange individuals and must face traumatic memories.

Juliet of the Spirits follows a narrative structure and tone similar to *8 ½*. It too makes use of dreams and fantasies that appear intermittently throughout the film. It was also filmed on Fellini's set, Cinecittà, and like *8 ½* omits establishing shots and makes use of artificial sets. All of these techniques give the film the loose-fitting composition that gave *8 ½* its dream-like feeling. However, *Juliet of the Spirits* was Fellini's first feature to be filmed entirely in color. When asked about this decision, he often cites his interest in dreams as a source. He has been quoted as saying "...color is a part not only of the language but also the idea and the feeling of a dream."¹² What results is a magical,

¹¹ Bondanella (1990)

¹² Bondanella (1992)

dazzling story that truly appears to take place in the imagination. Like many of Fellini's other works, *Juliet of the Spirits* is done in a tone reminiscent of a circus, a motif supported by the wild scoring of his collaborator, Nino Rota.

The main focus of *Juliet of the Spirits* is the failing marriage of Juliet and Giorgio. After discovering that her husband is cheating on her, Juliet begins to question herself and goes on a deep, introspective voyage. It soon becomes apparent that Giorgio is not the main source of her problems and the attention of the film shifts a bit to explore the underlying causes of Juliet's psychological fixations. Central to them are an over-protective and demanding mother and the repressive forces of the Catholic Church.

Juliet is somewhat of a dependant woman who seems to live in the shadow of her husband. She's rather obedient of him and displays little individuality. After being pressured by her sister, she agrees to have an investigator follow Giorgio around to see if he's really having an affair. After confirming her fears, she tries to find comfort by visiting her neighbor and speaking to other people. In one scene she even considers having an affair of her own with a young man but is haunted by an old memory and runs home. Juliet and Giorgio spend little time together and keep communication to a minimum. It is obvious that she cannot directly address her husband's affair with him and is forced to mull over it privately.

The promiscuous Italian male archetype shows up again in *Juliet of the Spirits*, however this time he isn't the protagonist. Instead, Fellini displays the alternate point of view. Much like Guido, the cheating Giorgio seems to display the same misunderstanding of the feminine, or anima.

Jung's concept of anima is especially important to *Juliet of the Spirits*. In many ways Juliet represents the anima of Fellini himself. The film, which centers on the psyche of a woman, was conceived of and written by a man. Thus, all of the projections of femininity found within it are actually from the point of view of a man. However, when paired with *8 1/2*, the two films compliment each other and represent a balanced psyche. The anima/animus theory implies that the human psyche is an androgynous one and incorporates elements of both sexes. This androgyny is repeated in some of the characters Juliet encounters in the film, namely the prophet Bhisma who speaks of free sexuality. For Fellini, the film is an exploration into issues regarding sexuality. It is often reported that the director had a number of affairs himself, some of them homosexual, though he repeatedly insisted that he was straight.

Faced with the anxiety of her husband's affair, Juliet begins to become unraveled. Her psychological problems are explained through the use of the memories and dream sequences. It seems that Juliet was never truly given the chance to develop her own personality. Growing up, her mother and sisters were very demanding and dictated Juliet's behavior. In a discussion between Juliet and her mother we see that this continued into adulthood. Her mother accuses her of not pleasing her husband, implying that she is the cause of his affair. In a later memory, it is mentioned that her family was very approving of Giorgio upon their initial meeting. Juliet's family no doubt had an influence on her decision to marry him and she is now facing the guilt of not being more independent.

Juliet's independence is further marred by the Catholic Church. Fellini often accused the Church of repressing individual sexuality and criticized any institution or

ideology that inhibits one's complete freedom. In one interview, he stated rather sarcastically that the Catholic Church "protects us from the devouring magma of the unconscious."¹³ In one memory of particular importance, Juliet revisits a childhood play in which she portrayed a religious martyr. In the play, the young Juliet is tied to a gate and hoisted above the audience. The play is soon interrupted by Juliet's grandfather. The incident was obviously very traumatic for her, as she revisits it a few times throughout the film.

The martyr memory is to *Juliet of the Spirits* as the harem dream is to *8 1/2*. It represents a turning point in Juliet's self-discovery. The memory, in which Juliet was exposed to family as well as the entire town, left a strong impression on the young girl that continued into adulthood. Later in the film, we see an adult Juliet embrace the younger one and help her off of the stage. This vision is a major step forward in her self-awareness as she is present in the form of child as well as spectator. She has learned to face her traumatic memories and come to terms with them. At this point, the "spirits" seem to disappear. At the end of the film, Juliet is seen walking away from scene left to scene right, the film sign for progress.

Fellini's usage of color in *Juliet of the Spirini* adds a new dimension to the meanings of the dream sequences he so fondly films. In full color, they come alive and shimmer, and alter the viewer's perception of reality. However, attention should also be paid to Fellini's use of lighting. Many of the characters' faces are obscured by shadows in night scenes or in dark rooms. This adds a bit of mystery to the characters Juliet encounters and heightens her overall sense of confusion. This also relates to the aspect of personality described by both Freud and Jung known as the shadow. The shadow

¹³ Bondanella (1992)

represents the unsocial thoughts, feelings and behaviors that we as humans possess, yet do not accept. It consists of the desires and emotions that conflict with accepted social standards and our view of an ideal personality.¹⁴ However undesirable it may be, the shadow has to exist in order to create a balanced personality. In the case of *Juliet of the Spirits*, the shadow represents the influence of the spirits, the unwelcome, dark visions that Juliet experiences. This idea can best be seen in Juliet's relationship with her prostitute neighbor, Suzy, who tries to help Juliet explore her sexuality freely or in the vision of a woman who had committed suicide and calls to her to do the same.

The finale of the film raises questions about the extinction of psychological issues. If we are to believe that Juliet's sudden tranquility is permanent, then peace of mind results with the simple acceptance of psychological problems and our past. A similar approach can be seen in the finale of *8 ½*. Both Guido and Juliet come to terms with their troubled pasts and learn that though the past cannot be changed, the future can. *Juliet of the Spirits* is the study of a woman who cannot be independent because of facing a lifelong of repressive forces. If this repression was to be carried out on a larger scale, the result would be a society much like the one described in *Amarcord*.

Released in 1974 and set in the Fascist era of the 1930s, *Amarcord* tells the story of a group of characters living in the ocean-side town of Rimini. The film is often considered to be one of Fellini's most autobiographical, based on the events of his childhood. Many of the characters in the film are based on actual people Fellini describes in his memoirs. Not one for autobiography, Fellini denies this claim and describes the film as a return to the world of *I Vitelloni*.

¹⁴ Engler (1999)

Amarcord is essentially a character study with a cast of dozens. There is young Titta and his large family; his father who is arrested for being a former political activist; his uncle Teo who is a bit mentally challenged and lives in a home; and of course Gradisca, the local beauty whom the entire town admires. Fellini describes these characters, and countless others, as they attempt to grow under the repressive forces of Fascism. He depicts the silly rituals that they take part in, such as burning a giant bonfire in the center of the square, and describes them as “part of a leveling process which buries individuality in mass conformity.”¹⁵

The film doesn't exactly rely on a conventional plot line and instead opts for a series of events involving the townspeople. In many ways the characters in *Amarcord* become a metaphor for the entire country of Italy during the Fascist period. They are a confused, but seemingly content lot who never dare to question the motives of Mussolini and his regime. Their concerns are quenched by the ceremonies and rituals Fellini calls ridiculous. Oddly enough, they have become almost comfortable with the idea of having others think for them and tell them what is or is not acceptable. Fascism exploits an archetypal Italian weakness, eternal adolescence.

Fellini's concern with Fascism relates to the themes of his other films. In an attempt to understand how an entire country could fall under the spell of such an inhibitive ideology, he has cited the weakness he has explored numerous times before. The Fascists would have little trouble persuading say, the five young men in *I Vitelloni*. *Amarcord* should serve as a warning against the dangerous consequences of living in this immature state.

¹⁵ Bondanella (1990)

Fellini's attempt to understand Fascism is one that numerous political scientists and psychologists have undertaken countless times before. Like his accusations of the Catholic Church, Fellini criticizes Fascism for prohibiting individual freedom, thus stifling personal development. However, this time the repression is much more intense and done on a larger scale. The characters in *Amarcord* are drawn as caricatures. Their behaviors are erratic, neurotic and downright juvenile. This is done to illuminate their immaturity and explain their acceptance of the oppressive ideology. The townspeople are much more concerned with conforming to the group, then expressing their own individuality. Since none of them have a real sense of individual responsibility, no one has the strength to not take part in the rituals and ceremonies which perpetuate the cycle of obscurantism.¹⁶

From a Freudian perspective, Fascism is seen as the product of destructive influences from childhood and adolescence, usually sexual in nature.¹⁷ In a radical effort to repress these influences, all forms of personal expression are admonished. A system of thought is implemented so that individual members of a society do not have to think on their own, in a Jungian sense, replacing the collective unconscious. Conformity is stressed and the persecution of those who do not is threatened. Religion is frowned upon, since the individual's primary allegiance should be to the state. It is easy to see how sexuality would come to be repressed under such a society, with the elimination of anything deemed scandalous in nature. Since the ideals of Fascism substitute for individual thought, responsibility is left for others. Thus, citizens live in a state of

¹⁶ Bondanella (1992)

¹⁷ Bondanella (1992)

arrested development, perpetually existing as adolescents. The characters in *Amarcord* are all manifestations of the same arrested state.

Amarcord opens with a monologue by the village idiot, Guidizio (a character repeated from *I Vitelloni*). This immediately casts doubt on the reliability of the narrative that will guide the remainder of the film. Guidizio's anecdote about the "puffballs" that signal the arrival of spring equates the townspeople's ritual with utter ignorance. Soon after, we see another of the town's rituals, the burning of the giant bonfire. The bonfire serves no practical purpose and is another example of the ritualistic behavior that keeps the specter of Fascism strong. Later in the film, we see perhaps the grandest ceremony of all: the arrival of the ship called "The Rex." The Rex was an actual ship built by the Fascists to instill a sense of pride and reassurance in the Italian citizens. It was used as a symbol of the great potential of Fascism. When news of The Rex's arrival reaches Rimini, the townspeople set out on boats to witness its grandeur first hand.

Fellini films The Rex scene with specific stylistic techniques. Initially, the townspeople's boats float freely in the ocean. When night falls however, the scene shifts to being obviously shot on a set. The water is replaced by shiny, plastic sheets and the backdrop is flatly painted on a wall. Even The Rex is artificial, a series of lights shining out from behind a painted image of a ship. This inorganic set design is of course, intentional and is done to demonstrate the deceit of Fascism. The rather cheap construction of The Rex reveals the transparency of the Fascists' illusionary devices and the vulnerabilities of the townspeople who are so impressed by it.

By speaking only of Fascism, however, one denies the film its humanistic appeal. It is the characters themselves who give *Amarcord* its charm, providing humor, perhaps

as a defense mechanism, and turning the ordinary into a carnival-like celebration of the everyday. Young Titta, named after a childhood friend of Fellini, gets into all sorts of trouble at home and in school. He and his friends play practical jokes during class and are caught masturbating in a car. The punishment for masturbation is set out by a priest, as Fellini cannot help but include the Church as a source of the repression that Fascism exploits. In another scene of sexual exploration, Titta attempts to seduce Gradisca, the town beauty, in a movie theater. He repeatedly changes his seat, getting gradually closer to her. This scene is meant to illustrate the repressed sexuality of the town. Its setting, the darkness of a theater, highlights the extent to which sexual expression must be kept private.

The character of Gradisca is admired by the entire town for her beauty and is garnered with a sort of celebrity status. They compare her to Greta Garbo and compliment her elegance. It becomes apparent that Gradisca represents the individual desires of the townspeople. They project these wishes upon her and romantically view her as the antithesis of everything Fascism stands for. At the end of the film, she marries a Fascist soldier, almost out of defiance of the expectations the others held for her. The townspeople's affinity for Gradisca is only matched by their romanticism for the abandoned Grand Hotel. They share tales of the hotel which was the former setting of many sexual escapades. Now deserted and vacant, the hotel stands as a source of sexual fantasy, a relic of forgotten freedoms and a symbol of sexuality deeply buried within the unconscious.

Perhaps the most extreme example of the consequences of a repressed sexuality comes in the form of Uncle Teo. Teo is Titta's uncle, a middle-aged mentally challenged

man. One day, Titta's family decides to take Teo out to their country house for a picnic. All seems to be going fine until Teo climbs up a tree and refuses to come down. He begins screaming "I want a woman!" at the top of his lungs, over and over again. The family is forced to call a nun from Teo's home to come and coax him out of the tree. The nun is representative of the repressive force of the same institution that has reduced him to such a state. Teo stops screaming and climbs back down. This scene is immediately followed by The Rex scene, implying the potential of such repressive forces being transferred from an individual psyche to the entire population. The people, who cry upon The Rex's arrival and yell "Viva L' Italia!" have failed to discover a proper channel for their sexual drives.¹⁸

The Rex scene precedes a powerful one in which a fog consumes the entire town. Titta's grandfather gets lost in it and almost loses his way home. On his way back into the house, he passes Titta who is off to school. The fog is obviously a symbol for the veil of obscurity that operates under Fascism, yet it can also be interpreted psychoanalytically. The fog-engulfed town can be seen as the unconscious, either personal or collective. Though the inhabitants, as well as the viewer, are no doubt accustomed to the town, the fog gives it a foreign, disorienting feel. It is now a mysterious, unfamiliar place difficult to navigate. Animals are strewn about the scene, including a bull that crosses Titta's path. They may represent the primal, instinctive aspect of the sub-conscious. Titta and his friends take a detour on their way to school to peek into the Grand Hotel. They admire its beauty and dance as if they were guests at a party held in its ballroom. The hotel, which symbolizes sexual fantasy, has its doors open for the first time in the film,

¹⁸ Bondanella (1992)

reinforcing the idea that the town's sexuality is repressed and can only be accessed through the unconscious.

Towards the end of the film, during a snowstorm, a peacock inexplicably flies into town and lands on a fountain. Titta and his friends are having a snowball fight with Gradisca when they see the bird flying overhead. They immediately stop what they're doing and take notice. Soon, others nearby begin to come outside and see the peacock firsthand. As if showing off, the peacock spreads its tail and the people stare with amazement. To them, the peacock represents luxury, an ideal long since forgotten under the rule of Fascism. Their admiration for it is similar to that which they held for Gradisca. Even Gradisca is amazed at the creature and smiles at the sight of it. The peacock seems to embody everything forbidden under Fascism. It is beautiful, bold and seems to enjoy showing off its attractiveness by spreading its tail.

It is a bit surprising that Fellini's most direct study of Fascism comes thirty years after Mussolini's regime had fallen. Yet it seems to tackle the themes he has been exploring his entire career; the same ones neo-realism so blatantly tried to ignore. In this sense, the film represents artistic maturity, the arrival to a position at which Fellini can objectively reflect upon his life and career. *Amarcord* can be seen as Fellini's own science-fiction film that he has been attempting to make for quite some time. The director plays Guido by casting the characters of his childhood and calling them together in one place. Instead of dancing around a circle, however, he has them go about their daily lives yet makes sure to keep the same circus-like feel.

The career of Federico Fellini is one to be admired. His work spans a range of subjects and styles. The unique experience of growing up during the Fascist period of

Italian history and working during the reconstructive efforts that followed, has given his films a variety of meanings that can be read on a personal as well as national level. From *I Vitelloni* to *Amarcord* and beyond, Fellini has kept consistent themes yet has found new ways to explore them. His never-ending effort to understand the archetypes of Italian life was no doubt done to improve the culture of his home country, but was also done in an effort to understand himself.

It is difficult to imagine what Fellini's work might look like if it weren't for his experiences with psychoanalysis. His interest in dreams and the writings of Carl Jung dictated his choice to begin filming fantasy starting with *8 1/2*. For that matter, it is difficult to imagine what modern filmmaking would look like if it weren't for Fellini. He truly embodied the definition of auteur and introduced so many techniques into the filmmaking canon that it would be too much effort to go into them. Nevertheless, his films work mainly because they relate so well to the human condition. Ironically, through the depiction of dreams and fantasy, Fellini achieved a level of realism that could never be attained with neo-realism alone. By using himself as a subject, his films strike a universalism and succeed in tapping into the collective unconscious of the viewer.

In assessing Fellini's work, Juliet's grandfather's comments in *Juliet of the Spirits* come to mind. His conversation with his granddaughter provides the view that our lives are fabricated from illusions and fantasies. If we react negatively towards them, as Juliet did, they can destroy our life. However, if we welcome them and accept them as the building blocks of our present personality, they can enrich our life. In these comments, it is not just the voice of a caring grandfather that is heard, but the voice of Fellini himself

speaking to us, the viewer. He hopes that the dreams and fantasies of his own life, i.e. his films, can help us realize and accept those of our own. Fade out.

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