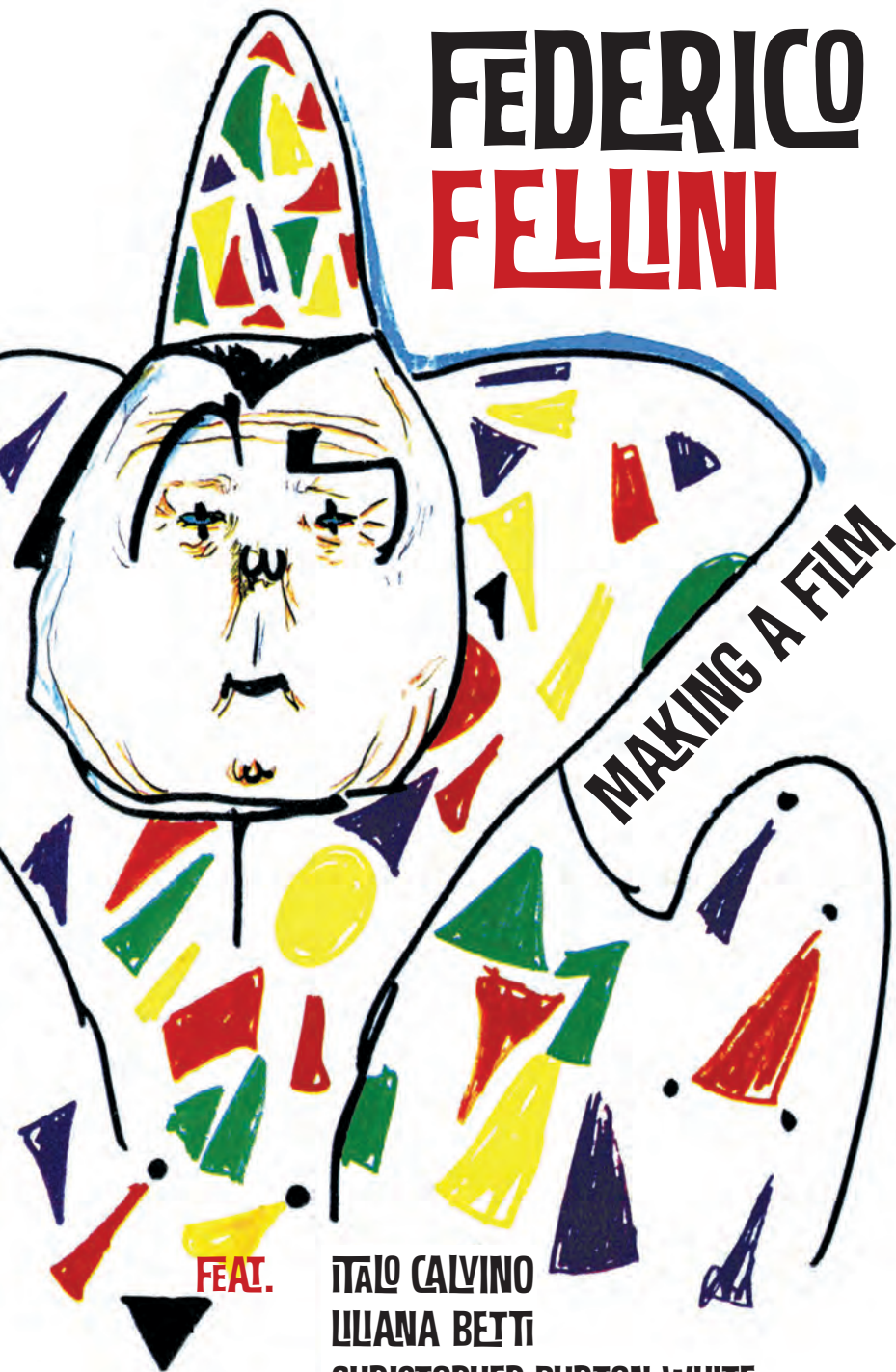


FEDERICO FELLINI



MAKING A FILM

FEAT.

ITALO CALVINO

LILIANA BETTI

CHRISTOPHER BURTON WHITE

FEDERICO FELLINI

MAKING A FILM

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY BY
ITALO CALVINO

AFTERWORD BY
LILIANA BETTI

Translated
& with an introduction by

Christopher Burton White



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INTRODUCTION

FEDERICO FELLINI: CARTONIST, SCREENWRITER, DIRECTOR

As one of the most renowned figures of world cinema, Federico Fellini has fascinated, puzzled, and moved audiences with his idiosyncratic productions for more than half a century. From the austere, symbolic landscapes of his early black-&-white movies to those sequences comparable to living dreams — at times nightmares — from his later ones, the imagery of Fellini's films has left an enduring impression not only on the minds of individual spectators, but also on the cinematic imaginary of the second half of the 20th century. Although official accolades are not always indicators of aesthetic value, the fact that four of Fellini's movies received Academy Awards for Best Foreign Language Film demonstrates that his cinema transcends national boundaries.¹ Contemporary filmmakers from Martin Scorsese to Emir Kusturica cite



1. *La Strada* (1954) was the first motion picture ever presented with an award in the Foreign Language Film category. Prior to 1956 the Academy sometimes gave "Special" or "Honorary Awards" to foreign films released in the US.

Fellini as a significant influence, and despite the fact that the last film he directed, *La voce della luna* (*The Voice of the Moon*, 1990), was released over two decades ago, the extraordinary cinematic worlds he created over the years, those rich images working in unison with Nino Rota's haunting and magisterial soundtracks, remain among the most distinctive ever captured on celluloid. Fellini's impact is even apparent in direct cinematic citations such as when in *La grande bellezza* (*The Great Beauty*, 2013), Paolo Sorrentino recalls the decadent Rome of *La dolce vita* (1960) as well as Fellini's fondness for the mysterious emergence of exotic animals like the peacock in *Amarcord* (1973). Signs of Fellini's lasting importance are visible from America to Italy and beyond.

Born in 1920, Fellini grew up during the fascist era in Rimini in Emilia Romagna. Although now a bustling resort, back then his hometown along Italy's Adriatic coast was just a small seaside village. In *Making a Film*, Fellini describes himself as an introspective child who preferred art and make-believe to soccer and outdoor activities. While he was in high school he honed his skills as an artist by drawing caricatures of tourists on the beach and making renditions of popular actors to put on display at the local movie theater; these experiences would later prove useful when jobs were scarce and work as a caricaturist at the "Funny Face Shop" temporarily substituted for screenwriting as film production in Rome came to a halt at the height of World War II. Yet, when Fellini

first moved to Rome in January 1939, he dreamed of becoming a journalist, not a filmmaker.

Before becoming a director Fellini wrote skits and made cartoons for various humoristic publications, most notably the satirical weekly *420* and the widely distributed biweekly *Marc' Aurelio*, until around 1942 when he began to develop a reputation as a screenwriter in the Italian film industry.² He worked closely with Aldo Fabrizi, the popular Roman variety theater actor, writing material for his theatrical routines and contributing to screenplays for films such as *Avanti c'è posto* (*There's Room Up Ahead*, 1942) & *L'ultima carrozzella* (*The Last Wagon*, 1943). His projects ranged from comedies to dramatic features and he collaborated on scripts for films including Alberto Lattuada's neorealist film noir *Senza pietà* (*Without Pity*, 1948) & Pietro Germi's *Il cammino della speranza* (*The Path of Hope*, 1950), a movie concerning emigration from Sicily to France.

In the early 1950s, Fellini finally began directing after working with Roberto Rossellini on the screenplay for *Roma, città aperta* (*Rome, Open City*, 1945) and assisting Rossellini during the filming of *Paisà* (*Paisan*, 1946). The experience with Rossellini was significant, especially his travels with the crew across the Italian peninsula, as was the opportunity to direct a brief scene for the

2. Tullio Kezich, *Federico Fellini: His Life and Work* (2006) 35.

Florentine sequence in the latter film.³ After co-directing *Luci del varietà* (*Variety Lights*, 1950) with Lattuada, Fellini was serendipitously offered the chance to direct *Lo sciecco bianco* (*The White Sheik*, 1952). Italian critics were not especially kind to his solo directorial debut, an undervalued satirical comedy that takes aim at postwar conformism, but *I vitelloni* (1953) was well received for its critique of the static Italian provinces and the relationship between the social environment and the idle young men born and raised there. The view of the *vitelloni* looking out toward the sea from the deserted pier effectively captured the existential torpor of the protagonists and served as a harbinger of the director's future projects. Fellini's distinctive vision was recognized the following year with *La strada*, which, according to Peter Bondanella, "represents the director's first mature exposition of a personal mythology of his own creation within a self-consciously poetic cinema."⁴ Although the visual style of the film bears an obvious resemblance to neorealism with its bleak environments & indigent characters, Gelsomina and Zampanò "reflect a multilayered array of symbolic possibilities not exhausted by their socio-economic conditions."⁵



3. Peter Bondanella, *The Cinema of Federico Fellini* (1992) 47–48.

4. *Ibid.*, 101.

5. *Ibid.*, 104.

Triumphs in the decades that followed, such as the meta-cinematic exploration of a director in the middle of a creative and personal crisis in *8 ½* (1963), and the autobiographical reflection on adolescence & the fascist era in *Amarcord*, ensured that Fellini would remain a significant figure in the history of film. The episodic structure of *Amarcord*, with events occurring during the course of a year in Rimini in the 1930s (signaled by the coming & going of the “manine,” or puffballs, drifting through the air), the fog and smoke that metaphorically suggest the blindness of fascism, the caricatures of the teachers and fascist officials, and the blend of humor & melancholy, a point of view marked by both criticism and commiseration, illustrate how Fellini built on that poetic sensibility he established early in his career and explored new territory, expanding our understanding of the expressive possibilities offered by cinema.

Fellini became known for extravagant *mise-en-scène*, quasi-autobiographical productions, and a preference for studio sets and artifice over realism and location shooting. His cinematic world bears a wide range of influences, from variety theater and the circus to art history, myth, & Jungian psychology. John C. Stubbs appropriately describes Fellini’s signature as a “style of excess” due to frequent use of grotesques and caricatures, layered compositions, startling juxtapositions,

and peculiar costumes.⁶ However defined, out of all the acknowledged auteurs of world cinema, Fellini's signature remains one of the most immediately recognizable. The American actor, director, & producer Paul Mazursky succinctly captures this long-term legacy: "He was a genius, so whether you loved his movies or you didn't love them, there's something so pure, unique, & special about his work that the word Fellini became a word in our language: Felliniesque."⁷

MAKING A FILM: A BRIEF HISTORY

In 1974, the Swiss publisher Diogenes Verlag AG released a German collection of Fellini's writings, comments, and interviews with the title *Aufsätze und Notizen* (*Papers and Notes*). According to Christian Strich, one of two editors for the project, after contacting Fellini about the book the director was kind enough to grant Diogenes "all the rights to his writings" and provide "all the manuscripts & documents which had been accumulating on



6. "Fellini's Manner: The Open Form & the Style of Excess," *Federico Fellini as Auteur: Seven Aspects of His Films* (2006) 1–36.
7. See the "Featurette" on the DVD *City of Women* (New Yorker Video, 2001).

his desk for some time — given half out of friendship, to demonstrate his confidence in us, and half in order to get rid of us and them.”⁸ The contents of the compilation were culled from a variety of sources, including interviews, autobiographical pieces, magazine articles, and other texts that initially appeared as supplements to published screenplays. An English translation of the German book followed in 1976 with the title *Fellini on Fellini*.⁹

This valuable Fellini resource contained a wealth of out-of-print and hard to find material; unfortunately, the English version had a number of shortcomings. A note at the end of the text makes it clear that there were two translators working from three different source languages (Italian, French, & German), and to complicate things further, there were also some English originals from Fellini’s heap of papers that were “reprinted without alteration.”¹⁰ Given the number of hands involved, as well as the variety of source languages, the quality of the texts in the collection varies considerably. *Fellini on Fellini* also lacks a cohesive structure; some chapters appear in

8. “Preface,” *Fellini on Fellini*, ed. by Anna Keel & Christian Strich (1976).

9. The first edition of *Fellini on Fellini* was published by Eyre Methuen (London) in the UK. Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence released it the same year in the US.

10. *Fellini on Fellini* (1976) 178.

narrative form while others consist of a series of random, isolated comments that can be misleading because they were extracted from longer pieces and stripped of their original context. In addition, *Fellini on Fellini* is ultimately missing more than half of the chapters that the director would eventually add to his authoritative Italian collection.

A few years later, Giulio Einaudi obtained the rights from Diogenes for an Italian version of the compilation. Friends and colleagues then encouraged Fellini to participate in the publication and, with the aid of additional Italian source materials, the director compiled & edited the comprehensive collection of autobiographical writings that would be called *Fare un film (Making a Film)*. The result was the definitive book overseen by Fellini himself, a more complete account of his life and work that spans from his childhood in Rimini to the critical & public response to *Il Casanova di Federico Fellini (Fellini's Casanova, 1976)*. A number of essential sections were added to the Italian publication, including a discussion of his early days in Rome and his unexpected encounter with Roberto Rossellini, an in-depth account of his first experience on the set of *Lo sceicco bianco*, director's notes on 8½ and *Fellini Satyricon (1969)*, chapters elucidating his intentions behind *Roma (1972)* and *Amarcord*, and his touching personal recollections of the Neapolitan actor Antonio De Curtis (Totò).

Italo Calvino's essay "Autobiografia di uno spettatore" (A Spectator's Autobiography), the Italian writer's memories of cinema in his youth and his thoughts on the significance of Fellini's movies, was added as an introduction to *Fare un film*. First published in 1974 as a supplement to a collection of Fellini's screenplays entitled *Quattro film* (*Four Films*), Calvino wrote the piece at Fellini's request. Born three years after Fellini, Calvino establishes the importance of Hollywood productions to those who grew up in his generation and provides justification for the prominent role of American cinema in the films Fellini set in Rimini (e.g., Gradisca's interest in Gary Cooper and the scenes that take place inside and outside the movie theater in *Amarcord*, Alberto & the *vitelloni* debating exotic vacations with Esther Williams & Ginger Rogers while hanging out at the café). Liliana Betti, Fellini's longtime friend, secretary, and assistant director, also contributed a brief afterword on the circumstances behind the book and Fellini's peculiar relationship to his own movies, that is, his reluctance to see the films he directed after he had completed them, and the urge to dispose of written materials that pertain to him.¹¹

Despite Fellini's popularity in the English-speaking world, and the fact that *Fare un film* has been reprinted

11. For more on Betti and Fellini, see Liliana Betti, *Fellini: An Intimate Portrait*, tr. by Joachim Neugroschel (1979).

regularly in Italy over the years since its initial release in 1980, the authoritative version of the book has never been translated into English in its entirety. Uncovering the reason for this puzzling thirty-five year delay is not within the purview of this introduction, but our edition of *Making a Film* finally fills this lacuna in the English library of resources on Italian cinema. The book includes all 14 chapters from the Italian original, a new translation of "A Spectator's Autobiography," & the first ever translation of Liliana Betti's "A Revealing Book."

Concerning the physical appearance of the characters in his movies, Fellini states that he "[tends] to highlight everything that can point out the person's psychology with makeup and costume."¹² The preliminary drawings he made in pen and magic markers were an important part of his creative process; the details in his sketches and handwritten notes illustrate that he often conceived of many of the most prominent visual characteristics of his protagonists on paper before shooting. *Making a Film* includes six examples of preliminary drawings for movies Fellini discusses to give the reader an idea of the similarity between the sketches & the characters as they appear in the completed films. For example, the sketch of



12. *Making a Film*, 256.

13. *Ibid.*, 101.

14. *Ibid.*, 135.

Gelsomina from behind depicts the elfin figure with her trumpet in hand and the notes written adjacent to it describe her signature costume: military cape, black bowler hat, and tennis shoes.¹³ A simple drawing of Augusto, the character from *Il bidone* (1955), portrays the stony swindler dressed as a priest with a pensive expression that might just indicate the possibility for redemption.¹⁴

Unlike some of his contemporaries, such as Michelangelo Antonioni and Elio Petri, Fellini never wrote film reviews or critical essays, which contributed in part to his reputation as an anti-intellectual.¹⁵ Despite his lack of interest in scholarly writing, criticism, & political debates about cinema, *Making a Film* reveals Fellini to be an extremely knowledgeable filmmaker who writes passionately and critically about his craft. His acute statement on the expressive possibilities that lighting opens up for a filmmaker shows that he achieved his aesthetic aims by way of deliberate choices based on precise technical knowledge; equally insightful if not prescient is his analysis of shooting for film versus television and the challenges or limits of television as a medium. Although Fellini does not speak of the death of cinema when

15. Tullio Kezich, *ibid.*, 60. For examples of writings by Antonioni, see *The Architecture of Vision: Writings and Interviews on Cinema*, ed. by Marga Cottino-Jones (University of Chicago Press, 2007). For Petri, consult *Writings on Cinema & Life*, tr. by Camilla Zamboni and Erika Marina Nadir (2013).

discussing television, the threat is implied, and long before Peter Greenaway's more recent pronouncement of the same.¹⁶ Also of note is Fellini's description of Roberto Rossellini and neorealism, a figure Fellini sees as "a sort of progenitor from whom" subsequent Italian directors "all descended."¹⁷

Making a Film is an invaluable resource for anyone interested in better understanding the life and works of the legendary director from Rimini. The book sheds light on the autobiographical aspects of Fellini's movies and provides keys to unlocking some of his more perplexing films. His conception of fascism as a sort of permanent adolescence explains the juvenile antics pervading *Amarcord*, notes on *Fellini Satyricon* provide the reasoning behind the bizarre aesthetic of his "great, suggestive, &



16. In various lectures and interviews, Greenaway has proclaimed that cinema died "on September 30, 1983, when the TV remote control appeared on the market." For one example, see Valentin Dyakonov, "Peter Greenaway: Cinema has died and I even know when it happened," *Russia Beyond the Headlines* (April 16, 2014). And in a 1999 European Graduate School lecture, "Have We Seen Any Cinema Yet?" (August 1999), Greenaway argues that, in addition to standard frames of various types, the television ratio of 1.33:1 (4:3) has also led to a constriction of imagery & how images are perceived. Similar critiques, however, were long ago suggested by Fellini in *Making a Film*. See chapter X (214–224).

17. *Making a Film*, 74.

mysterious fable," and Fellini's intense loathing for Giacomo Casanova and his lengthy memoirs accounts for his scathing portrait of the famous womanizer, a movie about "a man who," in Fellini's eyes, "was never born."¹⁸ *Making a Film* ultimately lends further evidence to Fellini's brilliance as a filmmaker while also proving that his celebrated talent as a storyteller is not simply limited to the screen and that his writings merit renewed and repeated attention.

18. Ibid., 167, 275.



Prostitute (*Roma*)

XII.

I'd been thinking about making a film based on my hometown for quite some time. The town where I was born, I mean. But you might say that in the end I haven't done anything else; maybe it's true, and yet I continued to feel as if I were weighed down, even irritated, by a series of characters, situations, environments, memories both true and invented, and they all had to do with my hometown. So in order to free myself from them once and for all, I had to place them in a film. In fact they were only meant for this purpose. I must admit that for some time now I've been making movies with the outlook of someone who's cleaning out an apartment, auctioning the furniture, moving things and obligations out of the way. Who knows what I'm making room for, or what place I'm trying to make habitable. I made *Roma* (1972) with this same sense of anxious clearing away in a neurotic attempt to exhaust my connections with the city, to neutralize the pressure of my initial feelings and memories. It was the same for *I clowns*. At a certain point I said, "Enough with the circus and all of the stories I made up about it."

I can't really say what takes hold of me when I'm struck by this urge to liquidate, do spring cleaning, or hold a going out of business sale. *Amarcord* (1973) was therefore supposed to be the definitive departure from Rimini, from the dilapidated and always infectious little theater of Rimini, with friends from school in the lead, the teachers, the Grand Hotel in the summer & winter, the king's visit, the snow over the sea, Clark Gable, Joan Crawford's full lips, Mussolini swimming near Riccione with members of the fascist militia bobbing up and circling him like shark fins. But enough with this series of dust-covered memories, for I run the risk of never ending them. With *Amarcord* I intended to say goodbye to a certain stage of life, the incorrigible adolescence that threatens to possess us forever & that I haven't figured out quite what to do with, to hold onto until the end or file away somehow. Let's be honest about it: this moralistic goal of becoming "adults," what does it mean exactly? And even if it's possible to become an adult, what do you do when you've become one? Have you ever met "adults?" I haven't. Perhaps true adults avoid running into people like me.

Let's return to the little town, this indestructible premise, the conditioning that begins before birth, the warm and rather vulgar nest, origin and end linked together inseparably. The movie I wanted to make was born out of the desire to attempt to interrupt, to separate these two overlapping terms entangled in a rather sordid promiscuity.

Talking one day with Renzo Renzi, the inspiration for a film about my hometown became clearer & the ideas more precise. He came to see me in Manziana while I was recovering from an illness to ask if I'd write the introduction to a book about Rimini. A title popped up right away, a half curse word that when written all together perhaps hid its blasphemous origins. It could seem like an exotic term, a tongue twister, a magical phrase from *One Thousand and One Nights: Osciadlamadona*. I was also tempted by another little word a bit shorter: 'Nteblig!⁴⁵ My grandfather always used to say it, my father's father, at any time, whatever question he was asked, whatever comment he was invited to offer. He said it to everyone: men and women, rain, wind, creditors, at baptisms and funerals. It seemed like it was always appropriate and it assumed the right meaning every time. He even called it out on his deathbed: "'Nteblig!"

I found Tonino Guerra and told him I wanted to make a film like that. Tonino is from Santarcangelo, one of the poorest parts of Rimini. He also had stories like

45. This mysterious term might have been coined by Fellini's grandfather. According to Mariela Tagliaferri, it "didn't mean anything," although Michele Brambilla suggests that "it could have meant 'in the umbilical' or even 'in' something else." See Tagliaferri, "Il mare di Fellini, l'eterna invenzione," *Nautes*, N° 4 (November–December 2003) 2; Brambilla, "Rimini, tutti come nei film di Fellini," *La Stampa* (May 8, 2012) 10.

mine to tell, with characters that shared the same lunacy, the same naivety, the same ignorance of poorly raised children, rebellious and yielding, mawkish and ridiculous, boastful and modest.

So that's how the portrait of an ordinary provincial town in Italy during the fascist period came to be. Fascism in *Amarcord* is not examined externally, brought back to life through ideological perspectives or historical research; I'm incapable of impartial judgments or sterile diagnoses. Thorough, complete definitions seem a little abstract & inhuman to me, or even a little neurotic if formulated by those who experienced fascism firsthand, for they were inevitably conditioned by it, it was woven into them, spreading into even the most private zones and aspects of life.

I was very pleased to read in a few reviews that fascism has rarely been represented as truthfully as it was in my film. Especially since I sometimes felt a bit marginalized when speaking about so-called political films. For example, I didn't understand why a movie with political content had to be considered a good film a priori. I've always felt excluded from such an arrogantly confident formula, & I'd never know how to make a political film that way. Politics, and by that I mean a political vision of life in which problems encountered while living are always identified and confronted solely in collective terms, seems a limitation to me. I must confess that everything that threatens to eliminate, hide, or alter the individual

and his very private story, causes reality to assume an abstract and schematic form, blends him into "categories," "classes," and the "masses," repels me instinctively. No matter how hard I try to understand it, familiarize myself with it, or participate in it, it clashes with my unsurpassable limit. The verbal delirium through which society's problems are systematically presented seems carefully devised to render us dull-witted, inert, in order to isolate and permanently exclude us. Rather than making me feel uneasy and embarrassed, sometimes my non-involvement in political issues comforts and protects me. I believe I'm fortunate, and I'm reminded of it every day in the newspapers, on the radio, and on television when I witness the great chaos of Italian politics. How do you really know what's going on in our country when the most frivolous of details, the most insignificant of events, the most unintelligible and gratuitous of theories, are piled on us in heaps, in an unending, cumbersome, verbose, excessively thought out record that's full of somewhat servile rather than constructive intentions? It's natural to suspect that anyone who willingly follows the topics and developments of basic political debates is cut off from a true understanding of what's really going on, & therefore even from the most remote possibility of being able to change things. Perhaps the process itself, the same tradition that creates political information, is politics & its tradition.

I also believe you should strive to do the thing you know how to, and more importantly, you should learn to recognize what you know how to do well before it's too late. General ideas isolated from sentiments & revolutionary abandon can also have an impact on me for a little while, but all of a sudden they exhaust me, I lose my bearings and I'm unable to understand anything further. So I draw back, I return to the territory that's most hospitable to me, one that perhaps represents at one time or another a failed revolution. You should always take your limits into account, since each one of us has precise boundaries. Maybe it's not possible to go everywhere. I believe it's better for me and for what I do to act and operate in a place where I seem to have something to say & perhaps the tools to enable me to function.

If instead by politics you mean to suggest the possibility of living together, working in a society of individuals who respect themselves and know their own liberty stops where the liberty of others begins, then it seems to me my films are also political, insofar as they discuss these issues, perhaps revealing the absence of it, a world denied that possibility. I think all of my movies attempt to unmask the prejudice, rhetoric, strategy, and peculiar conventions of a certain type of education and the world that produced it. What else can you do? It seems to me that an honest discussion about the need to project ourselves onto something, a discourse on faith, good will, and common objectives, is unfortunately still very

dangerous. When we hear someone who speaks that way we immediately revert to a childlike state; there's a sudden mortal danger of abandoning ourselves, of trusting, and there's always someone ready to take advantage of this abandon, to start the whole thing over again with the same errors, misunderstandings, and atrocities as always. Perhaps exposing the lie, identifying & dismantling the inaccurate & the false, continues to be for now the only resource — a sort of derisive, precarious salvation — of our disastrous history.

The province in *Amarcord* is one in which we're all recognizable, director included, in the great ignorance that blinded us. That said, I don't want to downplay the economic and social causes of fascism. What I mean to say is that what interests me is the psychological, emotional manner of being fascist: a sort of blockage, stopping development at the adolescent phase.

I think this interruption, the repression of an individual's natural development, must set off some sort of tangled growth to compensate. It's perhaps for this reason that when growth ends up being a failed, disappointing process, fascism can seem like an alternative to the disappointment, a fanciful, boisterous form of revenge.

Fascism & adolescence continue to be, to some extent, permanent historical seasons of our lives. Adolescence, of our individual lives; fascism, of our national lives: in summary, this remaining children forever, unloading responsibility on others, living with the comforting

sensation that there's always somebody to think for you, and at one point it's mom, another dad, the mayor, the Duce, the bishop, the Virgin Mary, and television. In the extreme, it may even be terrorists or whatever other subversive element we're willing to use to project, mistakenly identifying it as redemption, righting wrongs, visceral protest, dangerously confusing as usual the cure with its ailment and its symptoms.

I wanted to call the movie *Long Live Italy!* but that ungenerous, pretentious, coarsely dismissive sarcasm that seemed to suggest it risked becoming too broad and misunderstood with the film. Another title that tempted me for a little while was *The Village*, village in the sense of medieval enclosure, the province experienced as isolation, separation, boredom, abdication, decomposition, death.

I believe I recognize the eternal premises of fascism precisely in being provincial, in the lack of knowledge of real, concrete problems, in the refusal to deepen one's individual relationship with life out of laziness, prejudice, convenience, or presumption. Boasting of being ignorant, trying to affirm oneself or one's group not with the strength that comes from true competence, experience, or contact with culture, but from boasting, statements that are ends in and of themselves, the use of mimicked rather than authentic actions. The exhibition of sex is also fascism. Sex should be an emotion and instead it risks becoming a parade, something clownish & useless,

an ugly thing women endure, passive and stupefied. You can't fight fascism without associating it with the foolish, petty, unrealistic part of us, a part that doesn't have a political party and that we should be ashamed of. Saying you support an antifascist party isn't enough to repel it because that part is inside each and every one of us and fascism gave it a voice, authority, & esteem once already.

What other title could I have given to a movie that was heading in that direction? One day while I was scribbling on a napkin at a restaurant the word *Amarcord* emerged. But, I said to myself, now it'll be immediately identified as "I remember" in the dialect of Emilia-Romagna, when precisely what needed to be avoided was an autobiographical reading of the film. *Amarcord*: a bizarre little word, a music box, a phonetic summersault, a cabalistic utterance, or even a brand of aperitif, why not? Anything other than the irritating association with «*je me souviens.*» A word that in its extravagance could become the synthesis, the point of reference, almost an aural reverberation of a feeling, a state of being, a stance, a way of thinking and feeling, twofold, controversial, contradictory, the co-existence of two opposites, the fusion of two extremes, like detachment and nostalgia, judgment and complicity, refusal and acceptance, tenderness and irony, irritation and agony. It seemed to me the film I wanted to make represented that precisely: the need for a separation from

something that pertained to you, in which you were born and raised, that conditioned, sickened, & bruised you, where everything is muddled emotionally, dangerously, a past that mustn't poison us. For this reason it's necessary to liberate it from shadows, tangles, bonds still in force, a past to conserve like the most transparent notions of ourselves, our history, a past to assimilate in order to live the present more aware. That poor, ignorant, rough school; that oppressive, ridiculous obligation to stick together in the courtyards, in military displays, in church, at the movie theater, at gatherings to sing songs & give raspberries; and that somnolent solitude, enchanted by dreams of American cinema, filled with relentless masturbation, suspended in an inert and lifeless wait for a decisive event, fated, glorious, that we thought we deserved simply because we enjoyed the privilege of being Italians, and for the virtue of the blue sky, the pope, Dante Alighieri... is all of this just recent history now behind us? It seems to me we haven't gotten out of it, we haven't passed beyond its shadow.

The film is comic, it contains funny characters and ridiculous situations, but some of those who saw *Amarcord* were also touched by it, perhaps because of the nostalgia for past youth, or the things that once pertained to us, the tenderness, mutual understanding, & sympathy for a lost world it can be sweet to identify with. It's natural that it moves us and makes us sigh. But I also maintain the impression that in the microcosm portrayed in

Amarcord there's also something vaguely repellent. I felt a slightly fetid air, an imperceptible, intoxicating, maniacal fervor circulating through its folds, and it should instill us with a disconcerting feeling that encourages us to reflect and leaves us with a sense of embarrassment.

But maybe we don't want to acknowledge the embarrassment, uneasiness, and rejection of our way of being. We think we don't need to; perhaps we're convinced we're different or we've changed and fascism was only a historical phenomenon, a drowsy, dream-like period of our lives from which we were miraculously reborn. This perpetual repression of our true identity is one of our fundamental characteristics; we always refuse self-criticism & distance ourselves from the possibility of a more objective evaluation, always looking the other way, rejecting analysis & more up-to-date knowledge. We're even proud of this and we fail to realize that in this manner we bend to a biological submission to authority, dogma, and institutional values; and since no light, no critical detachment reaches it, we always find ourselves to be obsequious, with childlike sensibility, perpetually receptive to dangerous, mortifying experiences. This discourse might be vague and hasty, perhaps even a little unfair in its approximation, but there's no doubt that it's the same discussion as always, to be confronted & clarified.



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Italian filmmaker Federico Fellini (1920–1993) is one of the most renowned figures in world cinema. Director of a long list of critically acclaimed motion pictures, including *La strada*, *La dolce vita*, *8½*, & *Amarcord*, Fellini's success helped strengthen the international prestige of Italian cinema from the 1950s onward. Often remembered as an eccentric auteur with a vivid imagination and a penchant for quasi-autobiographical works, the carnivalesque, and Rubenesque women, Fellini's inimitable films celebrate the creative potential of cinema as a medium and also provide thought-provoking evocations of various periods in Italian history, from the years of fascism to the age of Silvio Berlusconi's media empire.

In *Making a Film* Fellini discusses his childhood and adolescence in the coastal town of Rimini, the time he spent as a cartoonist, journalist, & screenwriter in Rome, his decisive encounter with Roberto Rossellini, and his own movies, from *Variety Lights* to *Fellini's Casanova*. The director explains the importance of drawing to his creative process, the mysterious ways in which ideas for films arise, his collaborations with his wife, Giulietta Masina, his thoughts on fascism, Jung, and the relationship between cinema & television. Often comic, sometimes tragic, and rife with insightful comments on his craft, *Making a Film* sheds light on Fellini's life & reveals the motivations behind many of his most fascinating movies.

Available for the first time in its entirety in English, this volume contains the complete translation of *Fare un film*, the authoritative collection of writings edited & reworked by Fellini and initially published by Giulio Einaudi in 1980. The text includes a new translation of the Italo Calvino essay "A Spectator's Autobiography," an introduction by Italian film scholar Christopher B. White, and an afterward by Fellini's longtime friend & collaborator Liliana Betti.



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