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Author(s): J. P. Telotte

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J. P. Telotte

One of the pitfalls associated with any artistic movement is a tendency to feel bound to that particular approach or ideology long after it has ceased to have relevance for one's art or age. Compounding the problem is the fact that after an artist becomes identified with a certain movement or style, any ideological growth or shift in approach on his part may be met with incomprehension or disfavor by an audience which has grown familiar with that prior work. Federico Fellini offers a case in point, for as one of the early neorealist directors, he has subsequently drawn considerable critical fire for his supposed deviations from the principles espoused by Rossellini, De Sica, and others. An essay by Patrizio Rossi and Ben Lawton exemplifies the attitude towards Fellini's more recent films, suggesting that ever since *La Dolce Vita* his work has demonstrated a "total abandonment of neorealist principles" in favor of a "baroque" art, one depending more on a highly personalized and eclectic symbolism than on the realistic observation and analysis of social conditions.[1] Even more than *La Dolce Vita*, *8½* has drawn such charges and has seemed for many the corroboration of their suspicions that the quondam neorealist has betrayed his original vision with a totally subjective indulgence. I would suggest, however, that Fellini's deviations from his neorealist beginnings are more apparent than real, that he has, after his own fashion, kept faith with many of that movement's most basic principles. In *8½*, a film seemingly far removed from such neorealist classics as *Open City* and *Bicycle Thief*, Fellini still addresses many of the same narrative problems which these films confronted. This film represents not a denial of a neorealist aesthetic, but an evolution of its potential, and ultimately an affirmation of its validity.

One consistent principle of neorealist filmmaking was the avoidance of all overt symbolism or structured allegory in favor of the "direct, documentary-style rendering of life."[2] Rather than impose significance from without, the neorealist filmmaker, according to Cesare Zavattini, sought "to make things as they are, almost by themselves, create their own special significance"[3]; in this way reality would, for the first time, be allowed to tell its own story. To accomplish this goal a different approach to filmmaking was needed: natural settings, for instance, became favored over sound stages; whenever possible, the people normally inhabiting those settings were used in place of professional actors; a simpler style of camera work and editing, downplaying obvious directorial interference, came into vogue; and rigid adherence to a script was avoided in favor of freedom to improvise. In such a context, an elaborate symbolic plan clearly had no place, at least insofar as it constituted a preconceived intellectual construct which would be appended to that reality and to which reality would then be subordinated.

Another major consequence of the neorealist ideal—in fact, according to Zavattini, its single "most important characteristic" as well as its "most important innovation"—was a growing awareness that "the necessity of the 'story' was only an unconscious way of disguising a human defect, and that the kind of imagination it involved was simply a technique of superimposing dead formulas over living social facts. Now it has been perceived that reality is hugely rich, that to be able to look directly at it is enough."[4] Instead of concocting an elaborate scenario, then, the neorealist director sought out the small incident, the commonplace event, with the understanding that "the most irreplaceable experience comes from things happening under our own eyes from natural necessity." Beginning with these everyday happenings, the filmmaker hopes "to see, to analyse," and finally "to excavate reality," in order to obtain a more authentic perspective on life and hopefully a more moral vision.

The attack on Fellini's later work, particularly *8½*, has basically been along the lines just discussed. On the one hand, he has been charged with opting for an eclectic or unrealistic symbolic system. Timothy Hyman, for example, sees *8½* as the transitional film in Fellini's canon, one in which neorealism gives way to "neo-symbolism." Pointing to specific images like the girl in white and the rocket tower, he argues that the film "works by symbols" primarily.[5] In his original review of *8½*, though, John Simon demonstrated the problems to which such an approach might lead. He found in the film "something new: symbolism, metaphysics, solid intellectual content"; but because of the consistent "ambiguity" of those "symbols," he determined that Fellini was "unsuited to this kind of art" and that *8½* was at best a "confused" film.[6] At the same time, Fellini was accused by his countrymen of failing to live up to the neorealist's "moral responsibility" to truthfully depict reality. Actually, from the time of *La Strada* it was charged that Fellini's "perspective" was "wrong," that he had failed to convey that heightened social and political awareness which had become for many almost synonymous with neorealism.[7] In truth, such claims came primarily from Marxist critics who were themselves preeminently concerned with creating a greater awareness of poverty, political oppression, and the injustices of

everyday life. And when in films like *8½* Fellini clearly shifted his perspective from such specifically social issues, or at least from a semblance of socialist realism, he met with misunderstanding, including the charge that he had betrayed the fundamental principles of neorealism.

Of course, neorealist style and content were never so much dictated by any *a priori* aesthetic as they were almost *necessitated* by the post-war social situation and the conditions of Italian film production. With a measure of normalcy and prosperity returning to Italy, with a new climate in which the artist might work, films too had to undergo some change, if for no other reason than that they might remain faithful to these developments, and hence, properly "realistic." As Fellini pointed out, "surely the neorealists would not hope for the continuation of war and poverty just because it gave them good material."[8]

In his eyes, far more important than a particular subject matter was the approach taken in the film. The essence of the neorealist method for Fellini is "looking at reality with an honest eye ... seeing without prejudice, without the interference of conventions—just parking yourself in front of reality without any preconceived ideas."[9] Obviously, "reality" remains a loaded term, meaning one thing for the Marxist critic, another for a filmmaker like Fellini. Not wishing to be bound by a particular ideology or confined to a narrow perspective—as Zavattini or Rossellini did not wish to be confined to a strict story-line—Fellini has rooted his conception of reality in the experience of the individual, accepting therefore all the variety, richness, and ambiguity which such a perspective brings. He concentrates on "not just social reality, but also spiritual reality, metaphysical reality, anything man has inside him." In a letter to the Marxist critic Massimo Puccini, Fellini has asserted his belief that the only truly social perspective derives from a focus on "the joint experience between man and man. I mean that in order to learn the richness and possibilities inherent in social life, today, when so much is said about socialism, what is more important than anything is for a man to learn to be, quite simply, with another."[10] "What realism means to me," he concludes, is "a search into oneself, and into others. In any direction, any direction where there is life."[11]

For Fellini, therefore, neorealism was never so much a prescriptive ideology as it was a special way of approaching reality—"an attitude of sincerity." It certainly involves being as faithful to reality as possible, but such faithfulness includes avoiding the imposition of *any* alien structures upon one's material. Through the person of Guido Anselmi, *8½*'s film director protagonist, Fellini has dramatized his struggle to keep that "honest eye" steadily focused on the world around him. The story *8½* tells is of the artist's need to see reality clearly, sincerely, rather than through the filter of narrative conventions, especially those of symbolism and traditional plot format which had been rejected by the neorealists. Guido thus struggles against a compulsion to give his vision a symbolic form, and he balks at constructing a conventional story-line for his film, feeling it should, more properly, "narrate" itself. From this vantage, *8½* appears to be a chronicle of neorealism's striving to renew its vision, played out through the struggle to transform traditional, external structures of

symbolism and plot into the internal, self-generating forms of reality itself.

Even in *8½* it is fairly obvious that Fellini has not quite abandoned all of the film techniques long associated with the neorealist tradition. For example, apart from the opening dream sequence, he resorts to few unusual camera angles. His use of non-professional actors is well-known and even dramatized here as Guido searches for the proper "types," for the right faces to fit his conceptions of certain characters. In Guido's case (and, we might suspect, Fellini's as well), even those who are not actually playing roles in the film he is making are often viewed as actors, as characters playing in the larger movie which is the director's imagination. Guido's mistress Carla points out this blurred distinction between the actor and the ordinary individual when, in one instance, she notes that "you want me to put on an act like one of those actresses of yours." He then creates an impromptu story for her, suggesting with this improvisation a technique which was integral to the neorealist approach. Moreover, judging from Guido's uncertainty about the shape his present film will take, one might speculate that improvisation is a natural part of his own film method. True to his creation, Fellini himself still subscribes to this technique, as he has acknowledged: "very often, it is the actors themselves who suggest the action to me when they tell me their own stories, or when I see how they live off the set, during breaks."[12]

We might easily trace this approach back to Roberto Rossellini, Fellini's mentor and the founding father of the neorealist movement, for he has offered the opinion that "the formula of neorealism" was itself a "spontaneous creation."[13] In keeping with this aesthetic, Fellini asserts that "for me, the important thing is not to know why I do something but simply to do it."[14] Embracing inspiration and rejecting any overt intellectualization does not, however, come so easily for Guido; he is, instead, faced with a sort of artistic paralysis. He cannot simply accept and follow the impulses of his imagination, for he is beset by a "need to know," a nagging desire for certainty and reassurance which is stifling his creativity. First of all, Guido is troubled by dreams whose precise "meanings" leave him confused. He also seems intent on constructing a pointedly allegorical story for his latest movie, yet finds himself inexplicably dissatisfied with the project and unable to proceed. Running through both his dreams and the movie story—suggesting their interrelation—is a mysterious girl in white who, Guido feels, holds the key to resolving his real life as well as his cinematic problems. Complicating the situation are the many demands made upon him by others concerned with the movie—his producer, stars, co-workers, reporters—all looking to him for answers, demanding that he explain his ideas for the film, its intended meanings, or their roles in its creation. Guido's co-writer, Daumier, serves as an embodiment of these repeated pressures to explicate and signify, as he continually prods the director with comments like "What does it mean?" and decries the fact that the film "has no philosophic premise whatsoever."

Avoiding such an emphasis on analysis and abstraction, Fellini suggests, may be especially hard for someone like Guido, for he has been brought up in a culture ruled by certain powerful symbols. In particular, memories of his Catholic education, heavily dogmatic and

iconic in nature, continue to crowd his consciousness, bringing with them a sense of guilt, of restrictiveness, from which he has been unable to find release. With these, as well as a number of other culturally-fostered restraints, constantly impinging upon his present experience, Guido finds himself in a quandary, unable to repress his creative impulses, yet incapable of freely tapping the rich possibilities of his imagination.

In a flashback to Guido's youth, to a time when he was caught watching the prostitute Saraghina dance on the beach, his restrictive atmosphere is linked to a symbolic perspective of the world. Chastised by the priests who ran his school, Guido is asked, "Don't you know, Saraghina is the devil?" And their admonishment demonstrates the workings of the symbolic mind, subordinating, even denying Saraghina's humanity in favor of some abstraction, specifically the view of her as an evil force, willfully luring the innocent to moral destruction. That identification between an attractive, though forbidden, figure like Saraghina and the devil himself is, however, quite beyond the young Guido's comprehension, and he truthfully confesses that he "didn't know." When he returns to the beach, somewhat fearfully, to test this new knowledge, though, all he finds is a woman sitting and singing—an unlikely evil siren, simply a figure to which, like so many other images he encounters, Guido finds himself very naturally, if inexplicably, attracted. Reality, it seems, makes no provisions for symbols.

Guido, the mature artist, is no less impelled to pursue those multiple, attractive images which flit in and out of his field of view. However, he still feels guilty for following this compulsion, for being so attracted by the stuff of reality. To emphasize this feeling, Fellini thus intrudes a number of confessional scenes into the film: Guido confessing his encounter with Saraghina, the older Guido's fantasized encounter with the Cardinal in the steam bath, Guido's request for understanding and patience from his wife Luisa. In fact, the film itself becomes something of a large-scale confession, admitting Fellini's ongoing fascination with the varied images of his world.

Perhaps the most fascinating of these images and clearly the one which most directly addresses the question of a symbolic approach to film is that woman in white. Apparently evoked by Guido's imagination, she appears without warning, intruding her dream-like reality into the mundane world of the spa; at one point she is dispensing its restorative mineral waters, at another bringing light into a darkened, dead-end street, and later, promising to "create order and cleanliness" in Guido's life. Her ethereal presence eventually gives way to concrete embodiment in the person of Claudia, the actress Guido has been awaiting, and around whom he hopes to structure his film. He seems to feel that her very presence might help to infuse "order" and meaning into the welter of images flooding his consciousness; with her aid he might finally recuperate his ability to make movies.

There is a flaw to such thinking, though, for it proceeds from much the same attitude as had earlier denied the humanity of Saraghina. Here Daumier thrusts home the fallacy of the symbolic approach to reality. Given Guido's tentative scenario, he makes several pointed comments about the girl in white, noting that "of all the symbols that abound in your story, this one is the worst." What

makes her image so suspect in his mind is the fact that her appearances seem to be only further "incomprehensible episodes" in a film which already "lacks a fundamental idea." A writer, Daumier is used to trafficking in rational counters—words, symbols, tropes; an image, in his mind, is valuable primarily for what it *means.* Thus those "capricious appearances of the girl in white," seemingly devoid of any preconceived meaning, are an affront to his aesthetic sense. At Daumier's repeated admonishments, though, Guido begins to wonder if he should append to this figure some abstract significance, if he should make her "the symbol of purity ... of sincerity" in his film. With this attitude, Guido approaches Claudia; he acts as if she were in fact the embodiment of these concepts and held the answer to the problems of articulation he faces in his film, to the fears and uncertainties plaguing his personal life. Frustration naturally results. When Claudia arrives, Guido simply abandons his screen tests, as well as the many problems associated with the production of his picture, to drive off with his star. As he exhuberantly confesses his joy at her presence, though, Claudia asks, "where are we going?" and although driving, she notes that "I don't know the road." It is, after all, Guido's task to "direct"; without his lead, Claudia only takes him as far as a dead end on a dark street. Part of the problem is that for Guido, Claudia has become only an abstraction, a symbolic remedy for his problems. He forgets that she—like Saraghina and himself—is a real person, also subject to being lost; as an actress she requires some direction. Recognizing his mistake, Guido finally admits to her that "there's no part for you in the film." What he implies by that, though, is that insofar as he conceived of his film as a symbolic undertaking, "there's no film," and as an extension of this allegorical system, no part for her to play.

When he was interviewed by the film critic Charles Thomas Samuels, Fellini addressed this same problem. He chided Samuels for constantly harping on "symbols" in his films and noted that "things are only what they are.... If the thing is vital and you look at it from your external point of view, you will never understand but will only project onto it what you think it should be."[15] The rational mind, searching for meanings, ever runs the risk of subordinating the reality of a person or thing to some conception which it is presumed to embody. As Fellini sees it, though, the true importance of such images resides not in some intellectual construct but in their very life, as ambiguous and impervious to rationalization as it inevitably is. These images essentially function not to embody abstraction; rather, they "narrate" their own story for us, a story of life and our complex relationship to it.

In a close-up a reporter at Guido's press conference gleefully asserts that "he has nothing to say," and Guido himself admits to Rosella, "I really have nothing to say. But I want to say it just the same." The latter statement particularly should be seen neither as an admission of failure nor of petulance, but as an intimation of Guido's gradual emergence from his artistic paralysis. After all, the director's primary narrative tool, the camera, cannot shoot abstraction; it focuses its attention on specifics, the concrete facts of existence, and permits these vital facts to have their own "say." Thus, Guido need not strive to symbolize, to mean—to "say" anything in that sense, for

what we see is essentially what is "meant." This is the reason that Fellini believes that the often repeated critical query, "What does this mean?", is, in fact, "a stupid question."[16] While throughout *8½* Fellini tantalizes us with seemingly abstract conceptions embodied in visual images, he does so in great part to drive home the inherent weakness of a purely symbolic or rational approach to both film art and life itself.[17] Truth, he suggests, resides not so much in conceptualization as in the perceived life which we often overlook because of the highly rational focus which modern society seems to foster.

For the neorealist, a shunning of symbolism should go hand in hand with, as previously noted, avoidance of a conventional story line, especially since a scenario is itself a symbol, an abstraction of sorts, in the minds of the neorealists. While a plot may offer a structure for the filmmaker's vision, at the same time it places certain strictures on that reality. This is not to suggest that neorealist film was devoid of plot; however, the truly realist movie was thought to be able to avoid this problem by virtue of its very subject matter. Rossellini, for example, suggested that the "realist film has the 'world' as its living object, not the telling of a story. What it has to say is not fixed in advance, because it arises of its own accord."[18] When viewed in this light, *8½* might emerge as almost an embodiment of Rossellini's neorealist dictum. The immediate problem facing Guido is that he has no clearly articulated "story" for his film, only a vague Hollywood-style science fiction scenario about a group of people seeking to escape from earth (and an impending nuclear holocaust) in a rocketship; and as his producer, stars, co-workers, and the press clamor for something more concrete, he feels increasingly guilty for lacking a more sharply defined story. At the same time, disparate elements of his personal experience—memories, dreams, reveries, even the present problems of movie-making—constantly intrude into his consciousness, displacing his thoughts about that conventional plot-line. Guido faces at best a hard choice: eliminate the insistent images of his imagination in favor of that science fiction story and please his collaborators, or give his subjective world free play at the risk of producing what Daumier calls "a series of incomprehensible episodes." In *8½* we see these two narrative forms struggling for dominance—the one a conventional science fiction tale, and the other a self-unfolding story after the neorealist fashion.

In the tension between these two narrative forms, we can see mirrored the tension within Guido, for they suggest the contradictory impulses which render his making of the film so difficult. The science fiction scenario is basically a story of abandonment, of leaving the human world behind, in this case, literally escaping in a rocketship. Such a story-line essentially imposes just such a problem on the neorealist filmmaker, since with such a conventional formula, as Rossellini points out, one tends to "stop at surface appearances" rather than to investigate "the inner motives in each of us"[19]; we thus "escape" from reality instead of seeking out its truth and committing ourselves to it. Guido's alternative is to accept the fact that the problems of his life and his movie-making will inevitably be intertwined. He might thereby allow his film almost to construct itself, and the tale it will tell will naturally be one of commitment and acceptance.

The science fiction story actually occupies very little of the finished film and is represented primarily by the models, paintings, and the unfinished scaffolding occupying the supposed movie location. All of these elements—and especially the yet to be completed movie set—tell a story of the future, implying thereby an abandonment of present reality. Fellini has, however, elsewhere affirmed the neorealist belief that "we must cease projecting ourselves into the future" and "learn to deal with matters as they are, not as we hope or fear they may eventuate. We must cope with them as they exist now, today, at this moment. We must awaken to the fact that the future is already *here,* to be lived in the present"[20] He suggests that man cannot escape his problems in a rocketship, that finally escape itself is just an illusion. In his film, we are told, Guido plans on superimposing drawings, scale models, and a full-size mock-up to create the optical illusion of a departing rocket. A visual trick, however, hardly may substitute for the real thing. In any case, such trickery should be anathema to the neorealist intent on photographing life as it is. A further problem this science fiction story presents—in fact, a problem posed by any such futuristic story—is that of location. No longer in the streets or among the people where day-to-day activity takes place, Guido has removed to a separate, distinctly *constructed* setting. Since the most significant events affecting Guido's life as well as his movie occur away from this set, though, Guido finds that one cannot remove himself from the world to make a movie about the nature of that world; such an approach is pointedly self-defeating.

What I would suggest is that each following sequence essentially takes up this same theme, as if each were a natural outgrowth or organic development of that opening; moreover, in keeping with this sense of growth, in each case some elaboration is added to that basic pattern. While Guido continually seeks escape from or a solution to the impingements of his world, he gradually comes to recognize the futility of escape and chooses, instead, to accept his situation. What he faces is, after all, the common human condition: the desire for an ultimate freedom—from cares, from restraints—frustrated as ever by the demands of one's humanity. Even Claudia, Guido's ultimate image of harmony, can take him only so far. Instead of granting him release from his personal and artistic quandary, she drives him into a blind alley. In following her lead (his natural urges), though, as in the process of chasing after so many apparently hopeful images, he at least learns something about himself. Claudia repeatedly intones that he does not "know how to love," and her admonition, seemingly so simple and obvious, heralds a new development in the narrative pattern. Suddenly Guido's film crew appears, announcing that work is to begin the next day on his film; in this instance, then, the "fall" back to earth takes on an almost affirmative coloring which prepares us for the promising conclusion to *8½.* As Fellini himself notes, Guido has begun to experience a "burgeoning of *love* for life"; he is moving towards "an *affirmative acceptance* of life."[22]

The final sequence of *8½,* which many people see as its most puzzling and eclectically symbolic element, carries out this theme of "affirmative acceptance" by further elaborating on the established narrative pattern. The circus ring finale and the preceding press conference appear to function independently, yet taken together they

represent the final evolution of the film's central pattern. Like the opening dream, this sequence begins with a car trip and eventuates in a traffic jam of sorts at the movie location. Here Guido is besieged by the press and imagines he can escape from their torturous questions only by shooting himself. After he fires his gun, though, Guido is shown in a long shot, calmly discussing the fact that he will have to cancel his film. From a dream of a final escape from life and its impingements, he has emerged into a world where he might reconcile himself to his limitations, even his failure in this movie. This acceptance, in turn, gives birth to its own image, the circus ring around which dance the many people who have touched Guido's life and work. As he first hesitantly, then actively directs their dance—even joins in the circle himself—we see the crucial image to which the entire film has labored: a celebratory circle of life, emphasizing simultaneously man's inevitable involvement in the human proposition and his need to accept the fact of this involvement, including both the pains and joys it must entail.

Just as significant for the film's narrative thrust is the way in which what may seem a disconcerting mixture of imagined incident and actual occurrence is handled. In both scenes there is clearly no distinction made between the different layers of reality; dream, memory, revery, and present time are all completely integrated, allowing no possibility for sorting one out from the others or establishing any hierarchy of realms. What Fellini thereby suggests is that in the world of movies, as in life itself, every element of human experience shares equally, together composing what we commonly label reality.

In *8½,* then, we watch the gradual unfolding or growth of a narrative in which images and theme are integrally related. The opening sequence establishes a pattern from which the rest of the film develops, and even the images within these sequences undergo an evolution of sorts. For example, the linear movement implied by the cars at the opening and later by the train, rocketship, elevator, and other cars, gradually turns back upon itself and eventuates in that final image of the circle, the movement to escape giving way to an image of involvement. In this respect as well, *8½* acknowledges the influence of its neorealist forebearers. *Open City,* for instance, opens with a shot of a gate and road leading to Rome; it is empty and the city is barely seen in the background. The film closes on a near-matching shot, but now the road is occupied by children who march resignedly back into the city to continue the struggle against their German oppressors. The city is seen clearly now, suggesting that it has received a new vitality, that despite repression, life will obviously go on. The message is finally much the same as that implicit in *8½;* there can be no escape, no breaking free of life's demands, only a resolve to deal realistically with the human situation, to commit oneself hopefully to life.

As Andre Bazin, the dean of realist film critics, pointed out, though, "realism ... is to be defined not in terms of ends but of means, and neorealism by a specific kind of relationship of means to ends."[23] Rather than tailoring the film narrative to suit some abstraction, the filmmaker properly "compels the event to reveal its meaning ... without removing any of its ambiguity." In *8½* this "event" is the

making of a movie, essentially an attempt to put into a meaningful form the multiple, attractive images with which the director—like any man—is faced. Fellini's method seems to arise quite naturally from this material, for in seeking to retrieve on film some element of the authenticity of life's rhythms, he has selected as natural a manner of presentation as it would allow. It is this methodology which, particularly in its eschewal of the symbolic and conventional narrative format, clearly marks *8½*'s origin in a neorealist perspective. One might even view this film as Fellini's response to his many detractors, especially those who would yoke his vision to a more conventional exploration of reality, forgetting in the process the very purpose of the realist film. What Fellini discovered from his early neorealist work is that "in a certain sense everything is realistic," that there is no simple "dividing line between imagination and reality."[24] He wished to extend his cinematic explorations to all of human reality; accordingly, he has allowed his means, his narrative technique, to evolve so as to accomplish that task.

In sum, I feel that Fellini's work remains firmly rooted in a neorealist ideology. Even his mentor Rossellini confessed that in all of his films he constantly returned, "even in the strictest documentary forms, to imagination, because one part of man tends towards the concrete, and the other the use of the imagination, and the first must not be allowed to suffocate the second."[25] Too often, according to the master, the *anima* becomes shackled by the demands of the material world; his student, taking this advice to heart, has in *8½* and his subsequent films evolved a narrative style capable of coping with such restriction and of balancing these seemingly conflicting impulses. Neorealism may indeed have been "only a beginning" for Fellini, but it is a beginning from which he developed a viable narrative technique and to which his later films continue to pay homage.

Repeatedly thrusting itself into the foreground to displace this science fiction plot is that other tale of the problems involved in the making of the movie. The resulting narrative complexity is perhaps most clearly the source of *8½*'s most quixotic elements, but at the same time it is an indication of its evolution from a coherent neorealist aesthetic. Rather than relying upon a straightforward, chronological narrative, *8½* existentially generates its own structuring principle, one admitting of temporal and spatial leaps within the bounds of a guiding pattern. In a sense, *8½* tells the story of its own coming into being and of its director's gradual awareness of this self-unfolding process.

As previously indicated, in this film Fellini combines various levels of what he perceives reality to be—dreams, memory, revery, and present experience. The transitions between these different elements are achieved almost entirely by means of simple cuts which could and do have a jarring effect in certain places, but which clearly offer no encoded judgment on ensuing scenes, as a fade or dissolve definitely would. In other words, the mechanism of the film does not clue us to think of one element of the film as being of a different level of reality from another; instead, it tends to blur the distinction between these various layers. Apparently, Fellini wishes to underscore just how intricately the fabric of reality is interwoven from all these elements, no one being of greater or lesser significance to the creation of the total tapestry of *8½*.

This same structural integrity gradually tells its own story, as the different layers of the film reality create resonances with one another. What we find is that a pattern emerges in each sequence of the film, and by their gradual accretion, these patterns eventually develop the "story" of *8½*. The film opens with Guido trapped in his car amid a monstrous traffic jam. He begins to suffocate as a poisonous gas seeps in, so he frantically tries to break out, to escape. Once free, he finds himself rising above the traffic and soaring high over a beach. He soon realizes, though, that this freedom is only illusory, since he is still bound to earth by a cord which he cannot unfasten and which his assistants have begun to reel in. He then plummets "definitively down" to earth and awakens from this dream. The pattern here is one of entrapment, apparent escape, and a recognition that one cannot escape. It would seem a natural pattern for a dream, because, like a conscious revery, the dream is a form of escape from the normal world, yet obviously a deliverance which must be short-lived, for one must eventually awaken to that other, "real" world. As Timothy Hyman has noted, though, this "sense of a succession of 'corresponding' sequences, with a common pattern, is maintained throughout the film."[21] Thus in the immediately following sequence, one occurring in present time, we find this pattern repeated, though without quite as jarring an effect. Upon awakening, Guido is pestered in his room by a throng of doctors, nurses, and co-workers, who prod him with questions, so for relief he rushes into the bathroom where, amid the bright fluorescent lighting, he confronts himself in the mirror. In this case again, however, Guido is yanked back to his surroundings by the insistent buzzing of the telephone, itself a cord of sorts, announcing his binding ties to the rest of the world.

NOTES

[1]"Reality, Fantasy, and Fellini," in *Federico Fellini: Essays in Criticism*, ed. Peter Bondanella (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1978), p. 258.

[2]Roy Armes, *Film and Reality* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1974), p. 67.

[3]"Some Ideas on the Cinema," in *Film: A Montage of Theories*, ed. Richard Dyer MacCann (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1966), p. 219.

[4]Zavattini, p. 217. The following references are to pages 225 and 217-18.

[5]"*8½* as an Anatomy of Melancholy," *Sight and Sound*, 43 (Summer, 1974), 174. Continuing his symbolic interpretation, Hyman further suggests that "the critic in *8½* is the voice of neo-realism" which, in the course of the film, is proved "wrong" (p. 174). The very fact of such an identification, however, clearly seems to run counter to Fellini's method throughout the film. In fact, Hyman demonstrates one of Fellini's main points, for in attempting to attach an abstract value to each image, he over-simplifies a complex concept like neo-realism.

[6]"Fellini's 8½¢ Fancy," in *Film as Film: Critical Responses to Film Art,* eds. Joy Gould Boyum and Adrienne Scott (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1971), p. 172.

[7]"Guido Aristarco Answers Fellini," in *Federico Fellini: Essays in Criticism*, p. 64.

[8]George Bluestone, "An Interview with Federico Fellini," in *Federico Fellini: Essays in Criticism,* p. 62.

[9]"The Road Beyond Neorealism," in *Film: A Montage of Theories.* This and the following quotation are taken from pages 379 and 380.

[10]*Fellini on Fellini,* trans. Isabel Quigley (New York: Delta Books, 1977), p. 61.

[11]"The Road Beyond Neorealism," p. 384.

[12]Pierre Kast's interview with Fellini, rpt. in *Interviews with Film Directors,* ed. Andrew Sarris (New York: Avon Books, 1969), p. 187.

[13]"A Discussion of Neo-Realism: Rossellini interviewed by Mario Verdone," *Screen,* 14 (1973-74), 70. In his recent article, "The Road to Neorealism," *Film Comment,* 14 (Nov.-Dec., 1978), 7-13, Ted Perry shows that neorealism itself very gradually developed out of the naturalistic Italian cinema of the period 1929-1944. Its very existence was thus the result of an ongoing evolution in Italian film narrative. See also Ted Perry's essay in this issue of *Film Criticism.*

[14]Charles Thomas Samuels' interview in *Encountering Directors* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1972), p. 119.

[15]Samuels, pp. 134-35.

[16] Samuels, p. 135.

[17]Roger Ortmayer provides a more detailed explication of this anti-symbolic approach and traces its development through a number of Fellini's films in his essay, "Fellini's Film Journey: An Essay in Seeing," in *Three European Directors,* ed. James M. Wall (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1973), pp. 67-107.

[18]"A Discussion of Neo-Realism," p. 71.

[19]"A Discussion of Neo-Realism," p. 71.

[20]"*Playboy* Interview: Federico Fellini," *Playboy*, 13 (Feb., 1966), 61.

[21]"*8½* as an Anatomy of Melancholy," p. 173. Hyman describes the basic pattern of *8½* as one of "Crisis, Liberation and Fall" (p. 173). The latter of these terms, however, seems to ill fit with the thrust of Guido's journey into understanding, for he experiences less a "Fall" than a reintegration with his world; and it is this final motion which, he gradually comes to realize, is actually the source of any "Liberation."

[22]"*Playboy* Interview," p. 61.

[23]*What is Cinema?* Vol. II, ed. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1971, p. 87.

[24]*Fellini on Fellini,* p. 152.

[25]"A Discussion of Neo-Realism," p. 72.