The Films of Federico Fellini

_The Films of Federico Fellini_ examines the career of one of Italy’s most renowned filmmakers through close analysis of five masterpieces that span his career: *La strada, La dolce vita, 8 1/2, Amarcord,* and *Intervista.* Providing an overview of Fellini’s early career as a cartoonist and scriptwriter for neorealist directors such as Roberto Rossellini, this study traces the development of Fellini’s unique and personal cinematic vision as it transcends Italian neorealism. Rejecting an overtly ideological approach to Fellini’s cinema, Bondanella emphasizes the director’s interest in fantasy, the irrational, and individualism.

Peter Bondanella is Distinguished Professor of Comparative Literature, Film Studies, Italian, and West European Studies at Indiana University. He is the author of numerous books and articles on Italian cinema, including _The Films of Roberto Rossellini_ and _Italian Cinema: From Neorealism to the Present._
CAMBRIDGE FILM CLASSICS

General Editor: Ray Carney, Boston University

The Cambridge Film Classics series provides a forum for revisionist studies of the classic works of the cinematic canon from the perspective of the “new auterism,” which recognizes that films emerge from a complex interaction of bureaucratic, technological, intellectual, cultural, and personal forces. The series consists of concise, cutting-edge reassessments of the canonical works of film study, written by innovative scholars and critics. Each volume provides a general introduction to the life and work of a particular director, followed by critical essays on several of the director’s most important films.

Other Books in the Series:

Peter Bondanella, The Films of Roberto Rossellini
Peter Brunette, The Films of Michelangelo Antonioni
Ray Carney, The Films of John Cassavetes
Ray Carney and Leonard Quart, The Films of Mike Leigh
Sam B. Girgus, The Films of Woody Allen
Robert Phillip Kolker and Peter Beicken, The Films of Wim Wenders
Amy Lawrence, The Films of Peter Greenaway
Scott MacDonald, Avant-Garde Film
James Naremore, The Films of Vincente Minnelli
James Palmer and Michael Riley, The Films of Joseph Losey
Scott Simmon, The Films of D. W. Griffith
David Sterritt, The Films of Alfred Hitchcock
David Sterritt, The Films of Jean-Luc Godard
Maurice Yacowar, The Films of Paul Morrissey
The Films of Federico Fellini

Peter Bondanella
Indiana University
For Dante and Gianluca
## Contents

**List of Illustrations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Federico Fellini: A Life in the Cinema</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>La strada</em>: The Cinema of Poetry and the Road beyond Neorealism</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>La dolce vita</em>: The Art Film Spectacular</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>8½</em>: The Celebration of Artistic Creativity</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><em>Amarcord</em>: Nostalgia and Politics</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><em>Intervista</em>: A Summation of a Cinematic Career</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selected Bibliography on Federico Fellini</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Fellini Filmography: Principal Credits</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Additional Films Cited</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Illustrations

Nino Za’s sketch of Fellini (1942), a drawing that remained on Fellini’s desk until his death page 13

On location during the shooting of the monastery sequence of Paisà: Roberto Rossellini, a young monk, and an even younger Federico Fellini 15

Fellini’s directorial debut in Luci del varietà: Liliana (Carlo Del Poggio) and Checco (Peppino De Filippo) provide a bittersweet vision of the world of show business 19

Ivan Cavalli (Leopoldo Trieste) is chased by a parade of bersaglieri troops in Lo sceicco bianco, a financial failure now recognized as a comic masterpiece 20–1

In Fellini’s first commercial success, I vitelloni, a drunken Alberto in drag (Alberto Sordi) dances with a carnival reveler 23

In re-creating the sensual celebration of Trimalchio’s banquet from The Satyricon of Petronius, Fellini presented one of the very few scenes taken directly from the literary source in his film Satyricon 30

A preparatory drawing by Fellini for a cardinal’s hat in his ecclesiastical fashion parade in Roma 32

Some of the cardinals actually represented in the film Roma based on preliminary sketches by Fellini 32
Three different sketches for cardinals to be included in the ecclesiastical fashion parade in Roma: the figures are compared to a cuttlefish bone, a ray of light, and a pinball-machine flipper.

A pensive Fellini on the set of Il Casanova di Fellini, a financial failure but an artistic masterpiece attacking the perennial myth of the Latin lover.

On an outdoor location shooting La città delle donne, Fellini shows Snáporaz (Marcello Mastroianni) how to kiss the enigmatic lady on the train (Bernice Stegers) who lures the film’s protagonist to the feminist convention.

Fellini’s crew builds a scale model of the ocean liner employed in E la nave va.

Amelia (Giulietta Masina) and Pippo (Marcello Mastroianni) – once partners in a dance routine – are presented to the television audience by the master of ceremonies (Franco Fabrizi) in Ginger e Fred.

Fellini on the set of his penultimate picture, Intervista.

Well before his rise to international fame as the director of La vita è bella (Life Is Beautiful), Fellini recognized the comic genius of Roberto Benigni, casting him as Ivo, the slightly deranged protagonist of his final film, La voce della luna.

In La strada, after Zampanò (Anthony Quinn) buys Gelsomina (Giulietta Masina) from her mother, he feigns kindness to her family.

The Fool (Richard Basehart) teaches Gelsomina (Giulietta Masina) how to play the trombone.

In their typical costumes, the Fool (Richard Basehart) and Gelsomina (Giulietta Masina) clearly represent comic types associated with the Italian commedia dell’arte.

Gelsomina (Giulietta Masina), praised by critics as the “female Charlie Chaplin,” displays her unforgettable face.

The deserted road, on which the characters of La strada travel, represents one of the most expressive poetic images of the film.

Steiner (Alain Cuny), the world-weary intellectual and friend of Marcello, commits suicide after killing his children.

The enormous set re-creating Rome’s Via Veneto inside the studios of Cinecittà for La dolce vita.

A scene from the famous “orgy” sequence of La dolce vita: Marcello (Marcello Mastroianni) humiliates a drunken woman while the revelers dance and watch.
The conclusion of the “orgy” sequence in *La dolce vita* with a striptease by Nadia (Nadia Gray) to celebrate her divorce

Marcello Mastroianni, Fellini, and one of his crew examine the monster fish created for the conclusion of *La dolce vita*

Sylvia (Anita Ekberg) arrives at Rome’s airport

Marcello (Marcello Mastroianni) and Sylvia (Anita Ekberg) during their historic wade into the Trevi Fountain, a scene still remembered by countless tourists to the Eternal City

One of Fellini’s dream sketches dated 12 November 1961 and drawn during the time *8½* was being prepared

Guido (Marcello Mastroianni) is relentlessly criticized by the French critic Daumier (Jean Rougeul)

In one of Guido’s dream sequences, the director (Marcello Mastroianni), dressed in the outfit he wore as a young boy in his boarding school, helps his father (Annibale Ninchi) descend into his tomb

Maurice the telepath (Ian Dallas) reads the mind of Guido (Marcello Mastroianni), uncovering the mysterious phrase ASA NIS MASA

The famous flashback to La Saraghina (Edra Gale), the huge prostitute whose dance on the beach prompted the traumatic punishment of the young Guido (Marco Gemini), here pictured in his black school uniform with his other classmates

The magic metaphor for artistic creation in *8½* – the circus ring – just before Guido (Marcello Mastroianni) joins the characters he has created in the concluding dance of the film

Outside the Cinema Fulgor in Amarcord, Gradisca (Magali Nöel), “Ronald Colman” (Mario Liberati), and a number of the townspeople of *Amarcord* gather before the shrine to Hollywood mythology in the Italian provinces

The passage of the ocean liner *Rex*, symbol of the Fascist regime in *Amarcord*

Titta (Bruno Zanin) unsuccessfully attempts to seduce Gradisca (Magali Noël) in the Cinema Fulgor

Titta (Bruno Zanin) tries to lift the enormous tobacconist (Maria Antonietta Beluzzi)

Young Italians dream of an ideal Fascist marriage before a bust of Mussolini in a fantasy sequence of *Amarcord*
Fellini directs the photography of the scale model of Rome's Cinecittà, the enormous studio complex outside the city that is the true star of Intervista 148-9

Fellini re-creates the kind of lavish historical set typical of films of the 1940s, the period when he first visited Cinecittà 152-3

Stepping into the scene that re-creates a film director's tirade during the 1940s, Fellini shows the actor playing the director how to play the scene and when the fake elephants should be knocked over 155

Marcello Mastroianni magically appears outside Fellini's office while he is shooting a television commercial on the lot of Cinecittà in Intervista 157