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## Music As Salvation: Notes on Fellini and Rota

“The best film music is not heard.” Why, then, does even the least musically oriented spectator remark on the musical aura pervading the films of Federico Fellini? Unlike films that accord a pre-eminence to music with respect to the image,<sup>1</sup> Fellini’s works focus only rarely on musical performance as the center of the filmic interest. What lingers in the spectator’s mind is the presence of the “background” music in composer Nino Rota’s characteristic style: lyrical, festive, contemporary, reminiscent of the fair-ground.

Speaking about the filmic image, Noel Burch makes the distinction between looking—an intellectual activity—and seeing—a nonselective, physiological activity. Similarly, we do not *hear* the sound track in its entirety unless we selectively *listen* to it. Further, as the human ear has proven a “lazier” receptor in the cinema than the eye, the spectator’s relationship to the sound track is even more complex, and to deal with theoretical and practical problems this poses becomes all the more difficult. Of the sound track’s three components, music, owing to its abstract quality in contrast to dialogue and sound effects, has most successfully eluded systematic analysis. To begin with, what are the pertinent musical factors for a given film, and how should we go about describing them?

Examining a specific narrative film—in this case, *Le Notti di Cabiria*—can elucidate some of the possible narrative roles that film music may assume. We must of course study not only the music, but the music in its narrative context, and in its direct relation to the image. We will also consider thematic music: when, how, and why it may recur. The musical score can act to promote continuity or to punctuate, as well as to comment on emotional states in the dramatic action, as will be shown. By virtue of its own inherent structures—repetition and varia-

tions of melody, harmony, and rhythm, for example—it can play an essential part in creating and/or reinforcing broad structural patterns in the filmic text. Being a relatively abstract and subliminal entity, it has power to emphasize or render ambiguous the distinctions among various levels of narrativity.

Fellini’s films are constantly preoccupied with mixing real life with a fictional universe. Most have frankly autobiographical scenarios, for example (whether as autobiographical fantasies or realities is irrelevant), and many take actors and only slightly fictionalize them (repeatedly with Giulietta Masina and Marcello Mastroianni). This tendency grows to such proportions by the post-*Satyricon* films that the cohesive strength of the plot gives way to a quasi-documentary effect, bigger-than-life and similarly disorganized. Fellini’s use of music throughout his career is singular for it regularly participates in the ambiguities actor/character, narrator/narrated, subject/object, and reality/fiction. Not only does it participate: it often helps to create these ambiguities—by means of synchronic and diachronic variations in its placement in the fictional world and by the level of musical consciousness attributed to the fictional characters.

In *Le Notti di Cabiria* this idea is particularly at issue; we shall follow its development to appreciate fully that music is, in fact, *the* subject of the film. The complexity of its interaction with the film’s other materials of expression ultimately resolves in a transcendental simplicity—a nonverbal moral statement. First we shall examine the role of recurrent music principally in *Cabiria*, and secondly, the opposition of diegetic and extra-diegetic music. (I use “diegetic” to refer, in the semiotic sense, to all that occurs within the apparent world of the narrative.)

## THEMES

*Cabiria* has four themes, that is, recurring melodies, all of which are heard as the credits appear at the film's beginning. Here are the melodies in skeletal form:



In addition there are a few pieces of music occurring only once, such as on two occasions over a radio, two songs played by a nightclub orchestra, music performed at a variety show, and Beethoven's fifth symphony (which I will treat elsewhere at greater length).

A theme is not necessarily a leitmotif in the Wagnerian sense, namely, a readily distinguishable musical line that becomes associated with a specific character, locale, or idea in the global text. In *La Strada* Fellini and Rota demonstrate the poetic power of the leitmotif in film, in its full role not only as a static or redundant identifying tag, but as a true signifier that accumulates and communicates meaning not explicit in the images or dialogue. *La Strada* has three leitmotifs: the theme of the road itself ("la strada"); that of Zampano, Gelsomina's brutish keeper and spouse; and that of the Fool, Gelsomina's saving angel. Let us briefly, and necessarily schematically, examine the fate of this third leitmotif. Once the Fool has shown Gelsomina that she has an essential place in the universe, that her life has meaning and value, she somehow acquires his song; from time to time she plays it, and the extra-diegetic sound track also assigns it to her. Even after her angel is gone, she has interiorized his lesson. We know this solely from the musical line which has now been transferred to her. Originally played by

the Fool on a small trumpet, the theme is destined to undergo several permutations in instrumentation and accompanying orchestration, but always remains easily identifiable through the basic clarity of the melody, just as the idea it represents retains its simplicity despite its continual reapplication to new situations. Its final transmutation is perhaps the most moving: what started as the Fool's theme, then Gelsomina's, ultimately becomes the broken and remorseful Zampano's, years after he has abandoned Gelsomina to her death. Hearing the leitmotif, this time sung unaccompanied by an anonymous woman, is enough to stir in him, and in us, the memory of Gelsomina and what she came to represent in the moral realm of *La Strada*. The Wagnerian leitmotif, then, forms an essential part of the action as a nonredundant signifier which undergoes changes in meaning as the story develops.

But a search for a strict system in *Le Notti di Cabiria*, grouping scenes or persons according to musical themes, proves relatively uninteresting. There does seem to be a principal theme for prostitution ("D"), and Fellini capitalizes on our increasing awareness of its association with the prostitutes and their street. On the first occasion it comes to us *via* a car radio in the scene. Another night, on the same street and with the same characters, we hear it on the sound track, harking back to our original acquaintance with it and *Cabiria's* companions. Finally, after *Cabiria* has met her prospective husband, we see her alone on the habitual street at night; theme "D" plays in the background, as if to remind us that the ever-innocent protagonist is still really a prostitute. A car passes to pick her up but in her reverie she does not respond. The music comments quasi-ironically on the action, or rather the lack of it. *Cabiria* should be seeking clients, but is not keeping her mind on the job. She is not listening to the music.

In general, however, the four themes are used rather loosely, not applied to specific characters, places, or ideas. Theme "A," for example, occurs several times throughout *Cabiria*, but

twice particularly effectively on an emotional level. When the actor Lazzari reconciles with his girlfriend, it swells romantically in reinforcement; likewise when Cabiria runs to tell her friend Wanda of her engagement, the same orchestral theme warmly accompanies her happy cries. It is a melody line which, largely depending on the instrumentation in each instance, is appropriate for the reinforcement of a certain range of emotions elicited by the dramatic action. It could be argued that the very presence of theme "A" in these two seemingly disparate situations sets up a connection, a comparison, nonredundant albeit nonexplicit in meaning. However, the use of "A" differs so dramatically from the treatment even of "D," its significance so "floating" in contrast, that it eludes any conscientious inquiry as to its meaning other than a generalized emotional one. Fellini exploits each of the themes primarily in this second manner—as mood setters, and not leitmotifs.

The fifth theme is silence. Music prevails so much in *Cabiria* that its absence is quite noticeable. Take for example the film's beginning and end, each of whose musical silence reinforces the other structurally. The very first shot, a long pan, shows Giorgio and Cabiria running toward the river; he grabs her purse and pushes her into the water. This and the rest of the segment depicting Cabiria's rescue has no musical accompaniment. In the final segment, equally devoid of music, Oscar walks with Cabiria toward the river, about to take all her money and push her to her death. The stakes are much higher now; so is the distance from the cliff down to the river; and the protagonist has in the meantime become a fully developed character with whom the spectator identifies. The silence, then, is all the more terrible. The ever-present music is not there to comfort Cabiria; a part of her reality is threatened or missing. But again we cannot attribute a specific meaning to the silence "theme" except in each particular context, because music is also absent on other occasions in the film, and without the least reference to these two segments.

### DIEGETIC AND EXTRA-DIEGETIC MUSIC

The interplay of diegetic and extra-diegetic music emerges as an important dialectic in the text. Kracauer in his *Theory of Film* requires that the source be explicit in the image,<sup>2</sup> though the music "may be alternately synchronized with images of its source and other images." His definition is erroneous, or at least becomes problematic, in numerous obvious instances. If a character in a film exits from an opera performance we need not see the performance inside, though it is certainly reasonable for us to hear a few strains of music before the door closes behind him. Likewise, in *Cabiria*, a guitarist plays somewhere at an outdoor restaurant though his presence is never visually rendered explicit.

Opposed to this is music that is outside the diegesis. We hear it on the sound track, but like a commentary or an internal voice, it could not conceivably be heard by the characters. This kind of music has traditionally had as its function to reinforce the emotional content of the images, whether it conveys a certain eerie tension like Bernard Herrmann's score for *Vertigo*, or a galloping pace as for countless chases in westerns, or the peace and tranquillity of a Mozart woodwind quintet in Varda's *Le Bonheur*. Note that music as reinforcement can work in either "positive" or "negative" terms; it can suggest emotional states parallel or in counterpoint to the action. A shot of a sleeping baby accompanied by ominous rumbling music will produce quite a different effect than the same shot accompanied by a music box playing a lullaby.<sup>3</sup>

We will get a clearer idea of the importance of the dialectical parameters of the diegetic vs. extra-diegetic in film music by going through instances of each in *Cabiria* to determine how each is treated, whether intended for the sake of realism, ambiguity, dramatic irony, etc.

(1) Music appears diegetically for the first time on the radio in Cabiria's one-room house. This is, in fact, the first appearance of any music whatsoever after the credits (the river segment being voice/noise only)—a point worth remem-



*Diegetic music (source visible) in CABIRIA.*  
Macmillan Audio Brandon Films

bering, for the last occurrence of music in the film will also be diegetic, and also associated directly with Cabiria as the listener. The importance of diegetic music in both the first and last segments is emphasized by the ominous musical silences before each, as I have already mentioned.

Cabiria seeks consolation in the radio music—something she certainly needs, just having not only been nearly drowned by her boyfriend, robbed of her purse, and locked out of her own house, but consequently having been proven naive in her trust for him. Wanda comes to comfort her but has a less soothing effect than the radio. The radio plays a role of convenience in supplying the scene's background music; but further, it already helps to establish the inseparability of Cabiria and music, a certain type of music—unsophisticated, rhythmic, jazzy. The segment ends with a shot of Cabiria outside the house; Wanda has walked off angrily. A new melody (theme "A") is heard on the sound track. Should we assume it to be another tune on the radio, or external to the characters' universe? The film provides no clear answer: it has set up the diegetic/extra-diegetic ambiguity with the first music.

(2) We hear music ("C") along with our introduction to the prostitutes' place of work, a street in the outskirts of Rome. It becomes evident that it issues from the radio of a car belonging to a pimp. When the mambo ("D") starts, everyone joins in a dance out on the street. Strictly speaking the theme on the sound track sounds too loud and too clear to be coming from the car's meager radio speaker, but we

will nevertheless call it diegetic with qualifications.

The same theme plays later on the Via Veneto where the pimp and his girlfriend have dropped Cabiria. It accompanies the image of the small, awkward heroine visually imprisoned between two threateningly looming hookers whose rightful territory it is. Can the music be issuing from the nearby café? There is no reason to assume so, but on the other hand the text has already made an issue of weak or ambiguous diegeticization of music, suggesting its pervasiveness in Cabiria's world.

(3) Theme "C" is heard again on a darkened street later the same night, as Cabiria still attempts to find a client. We have no basis for believing the music to be diegetic this time either, until Cabiria looks into a ground-level window, apparently that of a nightclub, and starts moving her hips in rhythm. Her response, then, indicates her awareness of the music as well as ours. Its source—probably a band or a record player—does not need to appear in the image. We note also how this retrospectively places into further doubt the "non-diegeticity" of the Via Veneto music.

(4) The next possible case of diegetic music arises shortly thereafter, with the appearance of the aging movie star Alberto Lazzari (played by an aging movie star named Amedeo Nazzari—a fact that contributes to Fellini's characteristic clouding of distinctions between the real and the fictional). After a tiff with his mistress outside the nightclub, he motions Cabiria to get into his car. Theme "C" plays once more; its source, though not indicated, could easily be his car radio.

(5) The diegesis provides the music for the entire sequence in the nightclub with Lazzari. Cabiria enters to the sound of a clarinet which plays an exotic melody to accompany two long-legged Negresses in their dance. Cabiria listens and looks on in a sort of tentative and unsophisticated approval. The show finished, the band switches to sedate mood music to which all including Cabiria and Lazzari dance. The following song, a fast-paced number, inspires Cabiria.



She dances uninhibitedly (as she and her companions dance to a similar kind of music at their regular night location), to the abashed amusement of those present—a reversal of all musical stimuli and responses at the sequence's beginning. Her identification with rhythmic, contemporary popular music is once again reinforced, this time by means of a contrast with the society of the rich, pretentious, and decadent. Finally, as she and Lazzari leave, theme "C" is in the air. Is the orchestra "inside" the sound track, outside the characters' earshot?

(6) One of the most striking scenes involving diegetic music—in which music virtually "orchestrates" for a while the dramatic action—occurs at Lazzari's residence. In his bedroom, Alberto sits down on the bed next to the record player (which indicates the immanent possibility of a diegetic music source). The second movement of Beethoven's fifth symphony is heard; a shot of Lazzari and the phonograph comes shortly after the music starts. When asked about Beethoven, Cabiria admits that it is not her type of music but that she enjoys it (as the first nightclub music, and indeed, Lazzari himself, are not her types). And for the rest of the duration of the piece, or until Lazzari removes it from the turntable, Fellini paces the action to match exactly the movement of the symphony. At the point of a great crescendo and modulation,<sup>4</sup> as the music swells on the sound track to improbable volume, a servant brings in a majestic tray loaded with food in silver serving dishes. The synchronization of music and action does not stop there; for a full two or three minutes they continue to indulge in spectacular interplay. During a quiet, pensive moment in the Beethoven, Lazzari, having inspected the champagne and its vintage, repeats the year 1949 nostalgically, *as if directed by the music* to do so at that time and no other.

Note 1: Can we by this time consider a third category lying somewhere between the diegetic and extra-diegetic? Is the music we hear exactly the same as that which the characters hear? And if not, may we justifiably speak of music heard by the "narrator,"<sup>5</sup> a sort of

music which, though one single signifier, has more than one signification?

There is a degree of stylization achieved by manipulating the characters' action so that they submit to *musical* division of time rather than dramatic or realistic time. The characters in the narrative film, whom we *conventionally* accept as subjects, unquestionably become objects when their movements and speech coincide strictly with the music: for we can consider musical rhythm—an abstract, mathematical, highly organized disposition of time—to be the opposite of spontaneous, "real" time. We sense that the characters have been *created*, and they do not inspire us to identify with them. The resulting stylization, then, necessarily constitutes a definite departure from concern for psychological realism within the diegesis. Consequently the music employed acts ironically as a much stronger narrative intrusion, even though "diegetic," than extra-diegetic music.

Note 2: Fellini enthusiastically uses the idea of the "orchestrated" scene in other films. Near the beginning of *Otto e mezzo* (8½) occurs a magnificent descriptive panorama of the health resort where Guido (Marcello Mastroianni) is staying. As Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries" plays, the camera obeys its rhythm; the shots we see seem to (ironically) fit the music, and not vice versa. Fellini weakly renders the music diegetic, providing visual indices of an open-air orchestra at the spa. Again the diegetization of the music lies somewhere in between the two parameters, simply because an on-location orchestra would not be performing the piece with such perfection, and with such clarity and volume exclusive of any background noise.

(7) Music plays a central role in the picnic sequence following the pilgrimage. We have witnessed Cabiria's naive expectation of some message of salvation, and the subsequent crushing of that expectation achieved filmically by showing the failure of the cripple to walk, and by expressive close-ups of Cabiria herself. Now



Cabiria, drunk, has reached her lowest point of despair and bitterly shouts her hopelessness to those near her, to herself, and to us. In more exact terms, her speech is directed to the rest of the set of diegetic characters, to herself as the protagonist and as voice of a point of view partially shared by the narrator, and to (from) that same metafilmic level that participates in the paradoxically diegetic music (see above, Note 1) which makes Fellini such a non-“realist.” Three distinct witnesses to her despair, hence three levels of interpretation. Wanda and the other prostitutes attribute Cabiria’s outbreak to her drunkenness and do not listen to the content of her ravings. Cabiria herself, tough character who believes she has learned to handle life’s misfortunes, is angry at the world, in the most concrete of terms (shouting, staggering, violently throwing a soccer ball), in physical actions and in verbal content as well. The metafilmic level, the narrator’s point of view, allows us to perceive the spiritual implications of the scene. The filmic text presents Cabiria’s life as an almost unbearable series of vulnerable/hurt, hope/despair progressions; and we see the picnic as a demonstration of her deepest psycho-spiritual pain.

At the beginning of the picnic the music appears extra-diegetic, until the introduction of the group playing instruments (accordion, guitar, drum) in a shot with Wanda in the foreground gently chastising Cabiria for her drunken behavior. They play all the film’s major themes as Cabiria shouts. A musical crisis, and outpouring, accompanies and contributes to her crisis. Diegesis and that which is external to it lose their meaning as separate entities.<sup>6</sup> The music acts as a recapitulation and compression of what has come before—and what will follow—and as a background continuum, both aural and visual, against which Cabiria’s release of agony, correspondingly verbal and physical, acquires remarkable force. The culmination of the scene is achieved when, having staggered over toward some parked cars, Cabiria leans against the side of a bus. The accordion music dissolves magically into the monodic melody of

a line of choirboys making their way across Cabiria’s field of vision beyond a stream. Framed by pure, fresh water, the stream and the arc of a water sprinkler, they sing an *ora pro nobis* that brings a simple purity to image as well as sound track. Cabiria’s expression changes with this dissolve from anger into serenity (her head lies under the bus gas cap which looks unmistakably halo-like). The scene thus executes a transformation: it progresses from considerable movement/society of prostitutes and boy-friends/polyphonic, rhythmic music, theme after theme/Cabiria’s physical and verbal violence—to relative stillness/children in religious dress/monophonic, arhythmic, “pure” music/Cabiria’s silence and truer perception of her surrounding universe. Movement also from verbal violence to a complete, if brief, peace independent of verbal communication.

(8) A live orchestra plays in the “Lux” theater: first as plain vaudeville entertainment, as in Fellini’s first feature film, *Luci del Varietà*, but then much more artfully and subtly as Cabiria, hypnotized to believe in “Oscar,” a pure and simple love, dances gracefully on the stage. Many of the musical examples already cited can cause us to doubt the care or sincerity with which Fellini diegetizes them. The quiet, hypnotic melody heard during Cabiria’s romantic trance at the Lux does not really suit the somewhat seedy instrumentalists shown in the orchestra pit. The handy presence elsewhere of portable and car radios suggests this same syndrome. It might be tempting to take to heart the rather uncharitable view of Hanns Eisler and Theodor Adorno in *Music in the Film*, that diegetic music is a cheap excuse for realism at points where the director wants to fill in gaps of silence on the sound track.

But the music in *Cabiria* does more than fill in spaces in the dramatic action. It is a force that works to erase distinctions between the diegetic framework, narrative framework, and spectator’s framework. Maurice Jaubert, whose understanding of the possibilities of music in cinema as early as the first sound films (his scores for Jean Vigo’s *Zéro de Conduite* and *L’Atalante*

have yet to be equalled) deserves the utmost attention, had this to say:

Into the raw materials of cinema—which acquire artistic meaning only from their relations to one another—music brings an *unreal* element which is bound to break the rules of objective realism. Is there no place for it in the film?

Certainly there is. For just as the novelist sometimes interrupts the telling of a story with an expression of his feelings, argumentative or lyrical, or with the subjective reactions of his characters, so does the director sometimes move away from the strict representation of reality in order to add to his work those touches of comment or of poetry which give a film its individual quality, descriptions, movements from one point to another in space or time, recalling of earlier scenes, dreams, imaging of the thoughts of some character, etc. Here the music has something to say: its presence will warn the spectator that the style of the film is changing temporarily for dramatic reasons. All its power of suggestion will serve to intensify and prolong that impression of strangeness, of departure from photographic truth, which the director is seeking.<sup>7</sup>

Though Jaubert does not specifically discuss diegetic music in this passage, we have already seen in Fellini how the diegetic–extradiegetic dialectic, with all its possible ambiguities, surprises, and stylization, is rich territory for narrative intrusion or dramatic irony, for the director’s “departure from photographic truth.”

(9) Cabiria, thinking happily about the “real” Oscar—the man who introduces himself to her after her hypnosis/disillusionment and who will capitalize on her trust and vulnerability in order to take all her money—lies on her bed as some soothing music plays. Her radio is nearby. If we assume the music comes from the radio, we set up a parallel between this scene and the end of sequence 1, that is, when Cabiria comforts herself with radio music following Giorgio’s betrayal. The correspondences between the two scenes in terms of their diegetic music situation, the visual elements of decor and the radio itself, and similarities of plot (Giorgio’s betrayal foreshadowing Oscar’s) touch off a series of structural resonances that reverberate consistently throughout the film.<sup>8</sup>

(10) At the outdoor restaurant where Cabiria and Oscar embark on their honeymoon, a guitar-

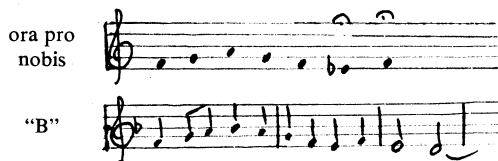
ist sings and plays (theme “B”). Though he does not appear on the screen at all, I consider this music diegetic in the context. The deliberate ambiguity already set up between diegetic reality and narrative musical comment, combined with the fact that this music is sufficiently localizable and appropriate to the action, support this view.

(11) The final segment finds the resolution of conflicts, pro-filmic and meta-filmic, in music. It begins as Cabiria walks despondently through the forest after Oscar’s ultimate betrayal; strains of an accordion are heard on the sound track. Until she reaches the musicians on the road, the film gives no indication that (a) she has been walking toward a destination, the road, and that (b) once again, the music is diegetic. Thus this scene participates in the situation already established on numerous occasions, the situation of retrospectively indicating music’s presence in Cabiria’s world. Why? Unlike the attractive mysteries of religion or magic, and more realistically (in the film’s pessimistic point of view) than the possibility of a prostitute marrying a “good” man, music as a source of peace has been there all the time, in all its simplicity and availability.

The very fact of the protagonist’s deep dependency, accompanied by seemingly extradiegetic music, recalls the beginning of the pivotal picnic scene. Indeed, the parallels multiply to such an extent as to confirm the structural and thematic pre-eminence of the two scenes in the global text. First, the diegetic source of the background music turns out to be a group of young people playing the same assortment of instruments: accordion, guitar, and various rhythm instruments. Theme “B” had appeared briefly in the picnic scene (and at the restaurant) as if in anticipation of its full expression at this point, for the walking musicians now adopt the song. Two different types of music played during the picnic, though, and the film’s final scene acts as sort of a *combinatoire* at the same time as a simplification (reducing the number of songs to theme “B” exclusively). The musicians play the same genre of music, but it is harmonically simpler, and in contrast to the



other themes, flowingly melodic, with no interval jumps between notes in the theme itself. In fact, we notice an uncanny resemblance between the choirboys' *ora pro nobis* and the stepwise rise and fall of theme "B":



Having suggested the idea of a musical *combinatoire*—the picnic musicians' rhythmic accordion style and the flow and direction of the choirboys' melody—we note the same principle operating in the depiction of the groups of performers themselves. Though the musicians in the final scene appear at first to share most of the visual characteristics of the instrumentalists at the picnic, they participate also—markedly so—in the choirboys' *youth* (they are teenagers at best) and in their *movement*. The picnic musicians were static, standing or sitting on the lawn as they played. The choirboys in contrast moved across the visual field as they sang. The musicians now move forward on the road, not in the choirboys' orderly lines, but in circles, at angles, and with pauses—with spontaneity. (One of the group rides a motorcycle—a detail to be classed with the men at the picnic, who associate themselves with cars, motorcycles, and the spatial realm of the parking lot.) In general the idea of the procession takes on a quasimythical dimension in the work of Fellini. It appears often: a patriotic marching band in *Lo Sceicco bianco*, a pilgrimage and a trio of musicians in *La Strada*, an orgiastic line dance in *La Dolce vita*, the grand finale of *Otto e mezzo*. And the road itself is a strong theme with Fellini, obviously central in *La Strada*, for example, with its own musical leitmotif.<sup>9</sup> At the end of *Il Bidone* the dying protagonist sees a small procession of children and their mothers, singing and walking up the road in the mountainous countryside where he has been abandoned. An even more pessimistic film than *Cabiria*, *Il Bidone* does not

allow Augusto to reach the road and his possible salvation from death.

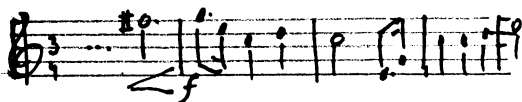
Salvation: the text of *Cabiria* has demonstrated a search for it in every way—through plot, imagery, thematic structures, character configuration, Fellini's own symbolic structures, and the disposition of music. The text has presented the agonized faces of the pilgrims, on their knees before relics of the Virgin Mary, calling out for her grace and for salvation from their spiritual drowning. It has shown the hypnotized subjects in the Lux theater fall to their knees also, praying and begging to be saved from the physical drowning they think is their fate. Twice, at the film's opening and just before the final segment, *Cabiria* has almost been pushed to her death by drowning. As the priest and the hypnotist guide the illusions of their subjects, *Cabiria* tries repeatedly to believe in Giorgio, in Lazzari to a lesser extent, and finally in Oscar.

The quest, then, may terminate filmically in the final musical procession. Music is salvation: unmotivated, gratuitous, ubiquitous. It is everywhere in the text spatially, temporally, and on all narrative levels as I have demonstrated. Its effect in the final segment owes to the fact that it provides answers to the film's conflicts in "form" and in "content," in the pro-filmic and meta-filmic contexts. Let us note once more the transformation achieved in the picnic sequence via the oppositions it had articulated (see 7 above): *Cabiria's* violent movement vs. her peaceful immobilization, stillness of first set of performers vs. movement of the second, social rank of prostitutes vs. church choirboys, adulthood vs. childhood, harmonic rhythmic music vs. monodic arhythmic music, anguish vs. peace. The final scene arrives at a resolution of these oppositions. *Cabiria*, neither violent nor immobilized, walks on the road *along with the musicians*; they move, though not in a strict linear fashion; the choirboys have been secularized and/or the picnic musicians have been purified; and the music has undergone an equally complete reconciliation of differences. Attained entirely by means other than verbal, *Cabiria's* salvation does not leave

her as it did halfway through the film. This time the music acts as the agent of *communications* between her and the youths. She joins the procession with a mixture of grief and joy, aware of herself, of those around her, and of the renewed possibility of life. The text closes not only with a close-up of Cabiria's face filling the screen, but also with a transfer to extra-diegetic instrumentation of theme "A" as an ultimate statement of the narrator's presence. The two presences, the protagonist's and the narrator's, are thus reconciled on an absolute and final plane.

## NOTES

1. E.g., the *musical* proper, or more experimental forms such as in Jean Mitry's *Pacific 231*, Walt Disney's *Fantasia*, and Jean-Marie Straub's *Chronicles of Anna Magdalena Bach*.
2. His rudimentary distinction of "actual" vs. "commentative" corresponds to diegetic and extra-diegetic.
3. An elaborated discussion of any music's emotive effect *a priori* is too complex to be included within the aims of this study.
- 4.



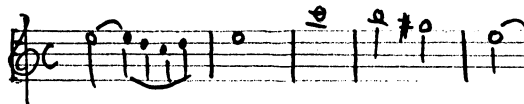
5. *narrator*: the force through whom/which the story is viewed and recounted. The intermediary, explicit or not, between the characters in the diegesis and the spectator.

6. In the context of the diegesis, why should they play those four particular tunes in such well-organized succession? Perhaps the "prostitute theme" and theme "C" have been in the diegetic air long enough to justify the musicians' familiarity with them. But especially in playing theme "B" they are acting as a musical oracle for the narrator.

7. As quoted in E. Lindgren, *The Art of the Film*, (London, 1948, pp. 192-3. Jaubert's original article in French is "Petite école du spectateur," *Esprit*, 1/4/36.

8. For instance, I find music's relationships to two pervasive thematic structures of prime importance. The first is the set of Cabiria's relationships with men: primarily the trio Giorgio, Lazzari, and Oscar, and secondarily the friar and the hypnotist. The other set of interrelationships has to do with three hopes of salvation: marriage, religion, and music itself.

9.



## GARRETT STEWART

## "The Long Goodbye" from "Chinatown"

An article last summer in *The New York Times* on the surprising number of "follow-up" films now in preparation, successors to such lucrative ventures as *The Godfather*, *The French Connection*, and *Funny Girl*, has christened this "the year of the sequel." The phenomenon seems to be oddly and indirectly borne out by the acclaimed advent of Roman Polanski's showy, taut, engaging film *Chinatown* in the undeservedly minor and placid wake of Robert Altman's *The Long Goodbye* (1973), in many ways the mas-

terwork of America's most interesting working director.

The more recent, more popular film has reminded several critics of Altman's disturbing predecessor, but has inspired few searching parallels. Yet in watching *Chinatown* one can feel *The Long Goodbye* lurking behind it with the latent force of a foregone conclusion. Altman and his screenwriter took a 1953 Raymond Chandler novel, with its famous Philip Marlowe hero, and updated it twenty years into the glare