

FILM CRITICISM

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Source: *Film Criticism*, Winter 1983, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Winter 1983), pp. 19-30

Published by: Allegheny College

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Fellini's Thematic Structuring: Patterns Of Fascism in *Amarcord*

Peter F. Parshall

Fellini's early films, notably *La Strada*, *Il Bidone*, and *Nights of Cabiria*, follow normal narrative structure and are relatively accessible to viewers. In his later films such as the *Satyricon*, *Fellini's Roma*, and *Amarcord*, the structure changes. Fellini reduces or abandons altogether the role of the central character, and although there may be a narrator (the filmmaker himself in *Roma*) or narrators, these films exhibit more complex points of view and their action often seems constructed from a series of unrelated episodes. As Louis Giannetti has correctly observed, however, these later films are not simply "tossed together":

Along with Godard, Fellini is one of the supreme formalists of the contemporary cinema. Like Godard, he has de-emphasized objective linear narratives in favor of thematic leitmotifs which are structured mosaicly.¹

Fellini is actually experimenting with subtle forms of filmic language which require more attentive viewing but result in a far richer communication.

One significant example of the need to examine his language more carefully is *Amarcord* (1974), which the critics have generally viewed as little more than a charming reminiscence of Fellini's childhood.² True, the film is set in a small town clearly patterned after Rimini, the town where Fellini was raised. The action seems casual: a

series of episodes occurring over the period of a year sometime in the 1930's, involving dozens of characters. For all this, the film's structure is not haphazard any more than its central purpose is lighthearted entertainment. Rather, the film undertakes a careful study of a most serious subject: Italy's pre-war drift into fascism. Fellini himself made this purpose clear. Discussing the fascist elements in the film, he identified the scene where the *federale* (a ranking member of the fascist party) visits the town as "the central, irreplaceable, indispensable episode."³ Indeed, this scene is critical in the film's structure, a structure so inextricably concatenated that it is difficult to trace separate strands for discussion. If we begin with the theme of fascism as a central nexus and trace it outward, we can discover how tightly unified the apparently disjunct scenes are. Although *Amarcord* begins with scenes of fluff floating randomly about, the film's own structure belies this image, just as the portrayal of fascism undercuts the scenes of seemingly carefree smalltown life.

The obvious place to begin a consideration of fascism in the film is with the party rally for which the whole town turns out early in the picture. This rally comes immediately after the sequence of scenes showing the church confessions and sexual fantasies of the boys who appear at many points in the film. By this juxtaposition, a first important link is made between immature sexuality and fascism.⁴ This immaturity is reflected in the rally itself, a grown-up fantasy which is rooted in sexuality. Just as the boys dream of being Men, the men in the rally dream of being Supermen. This overlap is reinforced by the fantasy sequence in the middle of the rally, where Ciccio, the fat boy, dreams that if he becomes a "fascist warrior" he will succeed in winning his beloved Aldina. All the men are encouraged to believe in this fantasy because of the actions of the women: we see Gradisca running along the edge of the crowd as the *federale* goes by, begging "Oh, let me touch him!" — she who has continually joked away the advances of all the town males. Her words reinforce the link between the rally and the confession scene, since Don Balosa emphatically forbade the boys to touch themselves. Gradisca's attraction to uniforms has already been shown graphically in Titta's confession scene where he recalled sitting next to her in the empty Fulgor movie house. She had not even noticed him, being totally engrossed in the sight of Gary Cooper on the screen, dressed in his foreign legionnaire's uniform in *Beau Geste*. If Gradisca, dream object of all the males, can be won only by a uniform, then a uniform is what they all must have. The sexuality underlying the rally is further emphasized by Lallo's remark as he jogs along: "Mussolini's really got balls." There is also the blatant Freudian symbolism employed: the boys twirling about their rifles and the girls flourishing their hoops.

The town's sexual frenzy is reflected in its major myths, all of which revolve around sexuality, notably the assignation of Gradisca with the prince and Biscein's fantastic tale of seducing harem girls. This frenzy is made incarnate by the feral Volpina (*volpe*: fox) who prowls the streets, licking her lips, and who squats down on the beach to urinate, an action Price equates with masturbation.⁵ Her "masturbation" also links her to the boys masturbating in the car, and vehicles

in the film become a major symbol of escape, particularly sexual escape. Other important sexuality/escape vehicles include the carriage in which the new whores parade through town, the bus that brings the thirty harem women to the Grand Hotel, the black car in which Gradisca rides to her tryst, the race cars in the *Mille Miglia*, the bicycles on which the peasant women sumptuously spread their derrières, and Volpina's bicycle which Titta gets a French kiss for fixing. Particularly significant is the motorcycle which roars periodically into town. It is blatantly aggressive and sexual, and its owner is escaping from his own world, wherever it may be. The motorcycle evokes Zampanó and his animalistic behavior in *La Strada*, but it also anticipates, representing "the future, the new, encroaching upon the past," according to Price.⁶ More ominously still, it represents the violence that is soon to sweep over Italy and over all of Europe.⁷

As the motorcycle illustrates, sexuality — which should be a creative force — can instead become channeled into aggressive behavior, can become fascistic. Fellini remarks, "Sexual exhibitionism is also fascism. It should be an emotion and, instead, it is in danger of becoming a show, something clownish and useless, an ugly thing which women endure passively and dumfoundedly."⁸ This is precisely what we see in the behavior of all the males, who follow Gradisca around like animals, leering at her and making overtures which she must constantly, smilingly, fend off. This is evident in the nightly sexual prowling around the town square (a parade that harkens back to the fascist procession) and at the bonfire, when all call out to her, the boys throw firecrackers near her (and near Volpina), and the members of the band tootle their instruments aggressively into her ear.⁹ (Gradisca's dream prince, we might note, makes no overtures to her whatsoever, but passively and silently accepts her offer of sexual favors... His behavior is in sharp contrast to the physical and verbal assaults she is daily subjected to in the town.) Sexual aggressiveness is pointedly linked to the fascists from the beginning of the film: at the bonfire, one fascist officer is seen in a window, framed by two pretty girls, firing his pistol in the air. Love has disappeared, replaced by sexual aggression.

Fellini encapsulates the nature of the fascists in the person of Uncle Lallo, who appears in brief but significant vignettes throughout the film. Lallo is seen at the bonfire, trying to trip the men processing with the witch, throwing fruit at Guidizio ("Temperance") on the pyre and teasing him by taking away the ladder, and leaping over the coals at the end with the younger boys. Thus, he is a bully and an adolescent. At the family dinner, he continues to eat imperturbably (and enormously) during all the quarrels, at the nightly town promenade it is he who announces the arrival of Madame Dora's new "recruits," and during the snowfall he chucks his cue while others shovel snow in the square. This primal *vitellone* then figures prominently in the fascist rally — jogging in the parade, toadying to the *federale* by handing him a pool cue, and running to search for the gramophone that plays the *Internazionale*. Fellini shows Lallo in his true colors particularly well in that scene, for Lallo, after pointing out the gramo-

phone in the church bell tower, ducks behind a pillar in the square when the fascists begin to shoot at the music, and then is illumined for an instant in a flash of light with a store window full of baby dolls behind him! Lallo is also probably a traitor, betraying Aurelio to the fascists, though he himself eats at the man's table. (Lallo's scarf, worn prominently both at the table and on the street, is bright yellow, the color of treachery.) Lallo's activities climax at night on the terrace of the Grand Hotel, where he romances a slinky blond lady (pausing briefly to salute a fascist leader at one of the tables) and then drags her off to the beach. As he brags on his return from the liaison, "I've never missed with a Fräulein." It is not love he wishes, it is conquest. The Grand Hotel, scene of his triumphs and symbolic locus of the town's sexual dreams, appears to be run primarily for the benefit of teutonic foreigners, hinting at the ideological roots of this mode of behavior.

The link between fascism and sexual aggression also helps to explain another apparently superfluous scene: the encounter of Titta and Lucia the tobacconist. Murray calls this "a particularly gross scene" and thinks it bad taste that "her grotesque aggression against the inexperienced boy is shot in a protracted close-up."¹⁰ He has chosen exactly the right word; it is aggression. The scene echoes the one where Aurelio has castor oil poured down his throat; in both cases the weaker person — sexual partner or political foe — is made to submit to the stronger party. In both cases, too, the outcome is ironic, since Aurelio and Titta each achieve their desire — disruption of the rally and sexual encounter — and find the results not quite to their taste. (The contrast is particularly striking between these scenes of "forced feeding" and the other instances in the film that show nourishment equated to love. These include Miranda feeding her family at the dinner table, her nursing Titta after his encounter with Lucia, the dinner in the country with uncle Teo, and the wedding dinner.) Rather than playing the scene with Lucia for laughs, Fellini demonstrates here how love has been replaced by aggressive sexuality. This same aggressiveness is portrayed in Volpina. As Titta fixes her bike, she squats down to kiss him, her face moving dominantly down and forward into the lens, her gasping open mouth filling the screen.

As the foregoing discussion shows, *Amarcord* is certainly not randomly structured, for many of its scenes are connected to the fascist rally and to the theme of aggressive, adolescent sexuality. But this is only one strand in the complex web. Returning to the scene we began with, the confession scene, we see that juxtaposing it and the fascist rally permits a second major link to be made, that between the Church and the fascists. This overlap is strengthened by having Aurelio forced to make a confession before the fascists just as his son had done before the priest. Both are given mild punishments: Titta must say three "Our Fathers," Aurelio must swallow castor oil. In both cases what is essential is the ritual submission, establishing who is really boss. The overlap between the Church and fascism is strengthened by other details. In an early scene on the town streets, one fascist leader says to another: "Grant the bishop the right to hang his

calendars. He can be useful to the party.” Then in the rally, as the fascists jog into town, the camera holds on the church tower where the bells are ringing before tilting down to show the parade. Don Balosa, the priest, is seen waiting at the train station for the *federale*, jogging in the parade through the streets, and standing in an adjoining room in the fascist headquarters when Aurelio is brought in. The point is clear that the Church is cooperating with the fascists.

In actuality, the relationship between the Church and fascism is a causal one. The Church’s sexual repressiveness leads to the expression of tensions in aggressive behavior: thus the confession scene is the proper antecedent for the fascist rally. The males find themselves caught in an impossible situation. On the one hand they are warned to “tell all” at confession and, in confession, told not to commit impure acts, not even to touch themselves. On the other hand, the everyday world which they inhabit is rampant with sexuality, resulting in an unbearable tension. Sexuality becomes twisted into madness, embodied in crazy Uncle Teo, shut away behind his iron gate, cut off from human and especially sexual conduct.¹¹ His cry from the treetop, “I want a woman!” is the cry of all the town males and his response to this frustration — pelting others with stones — is symbolic of the aggressive outlet which their frustration also finds.

Furthermore, the juxtaposition of Catholic Church and fascist party indicates that the two share important characteristics. To Fellini, both are authoritarian systems, with the Church a somewhat gentler form of fascism. Congruently, fascism is a kind of religion. Fellini establishes the link between God and Mussolini early in the film, in the classroom sequence, when the philosophy teacher is heard to say in the middle of a lecture, “This great reconciliation was the sole work of an indomitable leader who quelled the difference between church and State, who defined the moral fiber of our social order.” There is then an instantaneous cut to Don Balosa lecturing in another classroom, saying, “He is God’s chosen Son.” The deliberate overlap of descriptions indicates that Mussolini and Christ are now one, at least in the Italian school system of the 1930’s. These “deities” overlap also in their constant stern surveillance of human behavior. In Titta’s confession, Don Balosa told him that “The saints cry when you touch yourself” and Titta looked up into the face of the saint towering over him in a sharp low-angle shot. This shot is echoed in the gigantic face of Mussolini that glowers down on the crowd — an omnipotent deity, demanding total allegiance and correct behavior. Actually, the new religion has now replaced the old, for the fascists, despite their lip service to the Church, set their own values above it. This is shown most notably in the scene where they track down the offending gramophone that is playing the *Internazionale*. Locating it in the bell tower of the church, the fascists open fire unhesitatingly, and we hear numerous bullets striking the bell. The desecration of this act is underlined by the camera which watches the triumphant fascists march back to their headquarters singing, and then tilts up slightly to reveal a fascist banner draped over the street: “DIO

PATRIA FAMIGLIA" (GOD, COUNTRY, FAMILY).

With fascism linked so closely to the Church, it is not surprising to find it linked also to the two other major social institutions — the schools and the family. The link between fascism and education is seen throughout the schoolroom sequence, where pictures of the King and Il Duce decorate the walls and where lectures on history and mathematics are intercut with political indoctrination. The school-children are first seen running down the staircase to have their pictures taken, actions that will be repeated in the fascist rally, where the notables preen for the camera, jog along together, and line up in a stairway. All of the school teachers are in evidence at the rally, most notably the ferocious lady math teacher and Zeus, the headmaster with the red beard. A particularly striking parallel is found between a quick scene in the school, where Zeus slams his stick down on the desk while yelling at a student, and the scene where Aurelio is questioned at the police station and *il gerarca*, the local fascist leader, does exactly the same thing.

Fascism is linked to the Italian family, ironically, through the behavior of Aurelio, the ardent anti-fascist. The link is most clearly seen in the parallels between the fascist rally and the preceding episode with Titta's family around the dinner table. In that scene Aurelio, finding out that Titta had urinated on Signor Biondi's hat, leads Titta on by asking questions designed to trap him: "Did you have a good time [at the movies] last night?" This same mode of questioning is employed by *il gerarca*, who asks Aurelio: "So you don't follow politics, huh? Then why were you quoted as saying, 'If Mussolini continues like this, there's no telling...?'" Aurelio, we note, immediately assumes the same innocent air as the boys, responding meekly, "I never said anything like that. I only talk about work. I may have said, 'There's no telling how politics works.'" He who ranted and raved to his wife about his impossible children now has his tantrum parodied by *il gerarca*, who yells at him and mutters to the other people in the room, "Must we crack their heads to make them understand that we Fascists give them a sense of dignity?" Aurelio's childishness is underscored by having his wife, Miranda, lock him in the yard and take away his socialist tie so he cannot get out and make trouble. Then, after his punishment by the fascists, we see her anxiously looking for him and finally cleaning him up as he sits naked in the small bathtub on the floor. However, as soon as Titta enters the room and laughs at the stink, Aurelio again assumes the dominant role, chasing after Titta and swearing. The irony here is patent: the man who fights the fascists in town re-establishes his own miniature fascist state as soon as he returns home.

The alternation of Aurelio's behavior follows a typical authoritarian pattern — each person in the hierarchy dominates those below him and submits to those above¹² — and Fellini shows this to be the characteristic pattern in the society, with inferiors treated as children. In the classroom we observe the professors bullying the students and the students, in turn, bullying other students who are not in the "in group," such as Candela, the gawky boy in the math class. He was

publicly embarrassed by the prank which made it appear he had peed on the floor. Similarly, the fascists punish Aurelio by making him actually soil his pants. Their punishment of him, a dose of castor oil, is the same one given unruly children.¹³ Other actions show this same bullying behavior: removing Guidizio's ladder when he is on top of the bonfire and pelting him with fruit, teasing Volpina, throwing snowballs at Gradisca, harassing the blind accordionist, and so forth. The comedy in many of these scenes is undeniable, but so is the underlying cruelty. Fellini shows us, further, that all the major social institutions — Church, school, family — support fascism because they are themselves authoritarian systems and consequently produce the immature persons which fascism attracts. What is interesting about the fascists, Fellini has said, "is the psychological, emotional manner of being a fascist....It is a sort of blockage, an arrested development during the phase of adolescence."¹⁴ The persons inculcated by these authoritarian systems are incapable of asserting their individuality and independence. They may rebel, but they do so in a childish fashion. All of the pranks in the film — including particularly the incidents involving urination, defecation, and flatulence — show rebellion against authority in an ineffective and immature way, permitting the system to continue its domination. *Amarcord* thus succinctly portrays the societal structures which made inevitable fascism's domination of Italy.

By implication, also, the dominance of fascism comes about because of a spiritual vacuum. Religious parades, symbol of the search for meaning in life, have been replaced by the sexual parade through the streets at night and the fascist parade that worships Mussolini. The loss of Christian faith is emphasized by the "pagan" ritual that opens the film: the burning of the winter witch. Not surprisingly, this ritual is also linked to the fascist rally. Both begin with an explosion of music and in the festival the boys shooting their firecrackers were echoed by the man in the fascist uniform shooting his pistol into the air. In both cases we hear church bells ringing in the background. Guidizio, during the lighting of the bonfire, cries out "I came, I saw, I conquered," and gives the fascist salute in honor of the latest Caesar. These parallels indicate that the fascist parade is also primitive, also founded in ritualistic belief, also an attempt to drive winter and death away, also a communal clumping together that seeks to dispel individual loneliness. Fellini has emphasized that such ritual gatherings indicate the basic lack of independence of the people. "No one," he says, "has the strength not to take part in the ritual, to remain at home outside of it."¹⁵ This makes the fascist ritual all the more ominous, for it is not only fostered by the Italian culture of the 1930's, but is built into still deeper human needs which exist in all cultures in all times.

His real judgment of the fascist ritual and its surrogates is shown by an overlapping visual motif in all of them: smoke and fog. Smoke fills the town square in the *fogarazza* of St. Joseph, it billows out at the train depot when the *federale* arrives, and cigarette smoke pervades the police station as Aurelio is questioned. This smoke, and

the fog to which it becomes transmuted in the scene with the Rex, indicate the illusionary nature of these scenes. The smoke, says Marcus, "implies the obfuscations of Fascist thought, engulfing an entire population in its cloud of confused and chaotic misbelief."¹⁶ The fog is also a symbol of isolation: Gradisca is so caught up in her dreams that she ignores Titta, just as the townspeople, floating in the fog in their small boats waiting for the Rex, are cut off from one another. And as the great liner rushes by, leaving them bobbing in its wake, they are shown to be isolated from the outside world also. Fellini thought originally of titling the film *Il borgo*, with reference to a walled medieval town, to emphasize how Italy's provincialism of the time paved the way to fascism. He remarked, "I seem to recognize the eternal premises of fascism precisely in being provincial, therefore, in the lack of information, in the lack of awareness of problems which are concretely real, in the refusal to go deeper into matters of life."¹⁷ The image is expanded further near the end of the picture when Titta's grandfather is caught in the fog, a fog so dense he cannot find his own front gate, and wonders if that is what death is like. The message seems clear. The romantic fog of fascism may appear harmless enough at first, allowing the people to strut a bit in the parade and bask in the reflected glory of the giant liner, symbol of their new national pride. But this fog eventually becomes all-enveloping, isolating, blinding, a symbol of death.

This connection of fascism with death is re-emphasized by the film's two final ceremonies — the funeral parade of Miranda and the wedding of Gradisca. Miranda's death seems to signal the loss of maternal caring and of Christian faith. By juxtaposition, the funeral also casts a pall on Gradisca's wedding, which has a melancholy tone. She was established at the beginning of the film during the festival as "*Signorina Primavera*," lighting the torch that drives off winter. Dressed always in red, the color of passion, Gradisca is partly the symbol of the town's vitality, which is now taken away. Her wedding is further blighted by connections with the fascist rally. The photographer, who figured prominently in the rally and also began the school sequence, is seen for the final time at the wedding. By being in both those scenes, and by his orders for everyone to line up, he functions as part of the fascist system. (He was at the harem scene also, possibly a hint of the role Gradisca is slated to play.) Other details seem equally foreboding. The black car the couple drives off in is the fascist vehicle of death, a point which Fellini emphasizes by throwing in a quick shot of two horse-drawn carriages which appeared in Miranda's funeral scene. We also note that when Gradisca throws her bouquet, it lands on the barren ground.

Looking further, we see that Gradisca represents more than the town's vitality: she symbolizes its juvenile nature and its lost honor. She is as vacuous as any adolescent, delighted to be the featured attraction in the nightly sexual parade, her grinding hips the equivalent of the males' fascistic swagger. She adores being "on display": in the scene where she is snowballed, she nods and smiles to nobody in particular as she walks along the street, dreaming, no

doubt, of her imaginary fans. The appearance of the peacock in that scene, a traditional symbol of vanity, is a reflection on her, on Uncle Lallo who tries to catch it, and on all the strutting people in the town.¹⁸ Gradisca's pathetic fantasies of love, related during the scene of the Rex, are the personal equivalent of the national fantasy of glory which the Rex represents and, like the deliberately fake-looking model used for the liner, a sham. Her dreams, like those of Italy, have been prostituted.¹⁹ The fairy-tale atmosphere of her tryst with the "white prince" had been neatly undercut by the mayor saying to her as they rode toward the Grand Hotel: "Try to get a word in about the funds to repair the harbor." Those words link her assignation to the immediately preceding fascist rally, where the mayor was heard to say to the *federale* as they jogged down the street: "I can vouch for their [the people's] loyalty, but we need funds for the harbor." Gradisca and Italy are selling themselves for better harbors and trains that run on time. Her marriage is unlikely to bring her joy because she has not chosen a real human being, but a uniform; although she longed for a Gary Cooper she settles for a rotund *carabiniere*. He appears pleasant enough, but is linked to the military, and his wedding toast (his only line in the scene) clearly belongs at a party rally: "*Viva l'Italia*."²⁰ The implication is plain that Gradisca, a symbol not only of the town but of all Italy, has mistaken Mussolini for her Prince Charming. The fertility ceremony which began the film is completed here with the "sacred wedding," but the "new king" will bring death, not life, to the kingdom.

The central message of the film is therefore that the time of innocence is over. Many scenes in the film have echoed this sense of loss: Uncle Teo brought down from his tree and sent back to the asylum, the closing of the Grand Hotel in front of which the boys dance emptily, Titta following Gradisca and then losing her in the snow maze, the empty house from which Titta flees after Miranda has died. The final shots of the wedding show the deserted pavillion, the guests scattering, a last couple dancing, the empty sand. Fellini is famous for his "after the party is over" shots that establish an air of desolation, and ending the film on such a shot signals his final vision of the town's future. He himself characterized the film as having "a funereal feeling."²¹ Such a statement, however, may seem too gloomy an appraisal of a film which has many charming and funny moments. Its melancholy ending carries a hint of redemption: although Gradisca's bouquet falls on the ground, it is picked up by a small girl, a symbol of hope like the innocent girl, Paola, on whom the camera focuses at the end of *La Dolce Vita*. We may be encouraged to forgive the highjinks of Lallo and the others by Miranda's reminder: "*Ma è giovane lui*" — he's young. Even the fascists are portrayed more as clowns than monsters, their fumbling pursuit of a phonograph a source of comedy. Fellini's films, Edward Murray correctly points out, are a "celebration of existence,"²² and *Amarcord* shares in that celebration.

The film's lighter moments do not cancel out its serious meaning, however; neither should they be seen as frosting spread over

that message to make it more palatable. Rather, comic and serious elements conjoin, revealing Fellini's complex, often contradictory attitudes, where a serious moral judgment of Italy's shortcomings is balanced by a partly amused, partly despairing toleration. He cannot pass judgment, unfeelingly, on a history so intimately a part of his own being. While Rosenthal is correct in seeing a progressive detachment in Fellini's treatment of his past, moving "from the often warmhearted remembrances of *I vitelloni* to the hostile satire of *Amarcord*,"²³ the detachment is never complete. Fellini realizes he is one with the people he portrays, calling the film "a kind of heartrending refusal of something which once belonged to you, of something which made you, of something which you still are."²⁴ In keeping with this complex vision, the film maintains a dialectic movement which simultaneously celebrates the time of childhood and mourns that Italy's childhood has not yet been outgrown.

Amarcord, it has been shown, is no casual collection of Fellini's childhood memories. Its structure is careful and complex. Fellini has dispensed with the two most strongly unifying elements of traditional narrative — plot and character — and instead used themes (bullying, adolescent sexuality, perverted religiosity) and visual motifs (forced feeding, confession, fog) to link fascism with almost every scene in the film. Other works of art, notably some of the Expressionist plays and Soviet films of the early twentieth century, have attempted to use a whole group of people as a central character, but Fellini succeeds in avoiding the heavy-handed symbolism to which such attempts are prone. The film's tone is likewise complex. Fellini celebrates the joy of life in the small town where he was raised while simultaneously chronicling the forces that would wrench it from its innocent adolescence into the bitter brave new world. Rather than the self-indulgent wallowing in the past that some critics have judged it to be, the film is actually a criticism of the adolescent self-indulgence to which our society is still prone and the authoritarianism to which it leads. *Amarcord* thus reveals Fellini's firm aesthetic control and mature artistic vision and calls for a more careful appraisal of the structure and signification in all his later films.

Notes

I would like to express my appreciation to the National Endowment for the Humanities for the opportunity to pursue the research for this article as a participant in an NEH Summer Seminar on film, 1982, directed by Prof. Nick Browne. My thanks also to Prof. Roz Mass for her thoughtful critique.

1. Louis D. Giannetti, "Amarcord: The Impure Art of Federico Fellini," *Western Humanities Review* 30 (1976), 153.
2. Early critics lauded or disparaged the film according to their tastes, but almost all of them saw it simply as a pastiche of recollections: "constructed from reminiscences," according to Gary Arnold;

“a garland of memories,” said Clive Barnes. For summaries of reviews, see the bibliographies by Barabara and Theodore Price and by John C. Stubbs et al.

3. Federico Fellini, “Amarcord: The Fascism Within Us: An Interview with Valerio Riva,” in *Federico Fellini: Essays in Criticism*, ed. Peter Bondanella (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 20. (Hereafter cited as Fellini, “Amarcord.”)

4. Keyser comments: “Intellectually it’s sometimes hard to tie social forces like fascism, militarism, sexual repression, and religion together; cinematically, Fellini draws the connection with ease. Youths who hear of saints crying when they masturbate can easily fantasize about fascist figureheads lauding them and their virgin brides.” Lester J. Keyser, “Three Faces of Evil: Fascism in Recent Movies,” *Journal of Popular Film* 4 (1975), 25.

5. Theodore Price, *Fellini’s Penance: The Meaning of ‘Amarcord’* (Old Bridge, New Jersey: Boethius Press, 1977), p. 13.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

7. The motorcycle is also reminiscent of the ones which so ominously invade the city at the end of *Fellini’s Roma*. Edward Murray says of these: “Are these youths the new barbarians? Is Rome again ready for another fall?” See *Fellini the Artist* (New York: Ungar, 1975), p. 211.

8. Fellini, “Amarcord,” p. 22.

9. All the instruments in the film are sexual, including Biscuin’s flute played for the harem girls, the band at the Grand Hotel, and the boys’ imaginary instruments as they dance in front of the Hotel. This sexuality is introduced by Gradisca’s wiggling to the barber’s flute at the very opening of the film.

10. Murray, pp. 223-24.

11. In an interesting parallel, Aurelio is also locked behind his gate by Miranda during the fascist rally. This may indicate that he — and all the others in the town — are just as crazy as Uncle Teo, particularly when it comes to politics. As the doctor says of Teo after he is brought down from the tree: “One day he’s normal. The next he isn’t. Happens to all of us.”

12. “Every individual in a traditional hierarchy except perhaps for one or a few at the very apex is submissive to authoritarian decisions above him, and in turn exercises authority on persons below him.” Everett E. Hagen, “How Economic Growth Begins: A Theory of Social Change,” in *Political Development and Social Change*, ed.

Jason L. Finkle and Richard W. Gable (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1971), p. 75.

13. As Rosenthal astutely points out, this bullying is also adolescent behavior. "The Fascists take the same delight in this stunt [with the castor oil] that Titta's friends take in urinating from the balcony of the cinema." Stuart Rosenthal, *The Cinema of Federico Fellini* (South Brunswick: A. S. Barnes, 1976), p. 173.

14. Fellini, "Amarcord," p. 20.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

16. Millicent Marcus, "Fellini's 'Amarcord': Film as Memory," *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 2 (1977). 420. Gradisca, sitting in the movie theater staring at Gary Cooper, is likewise enveloped in cigarette smoke, symbol of her personal dream.

17. Fellini, "Amarcord," p. 22.

18. Gradisca is appropriately symbolized by the peacock, since her signal feature is her "tail," which she wiggles for the customers in the barber shop at her first appearance and on which the camera focuses repeatedly. Her hinderparts play a central role in the "derrière motif" in the film, and are emphasized in the scene where the peacock appears by being vigorously snowballed by the boys.

At the same time, the peacock suggests other possible meanings. "The ancient symbol of eternity and divinity," it was "adopted by the Christians and is used in connection with symbols of the Savior to show His divine character." (Van Treeck and Croft, cited in Eileen Baldeshwiler, "Thematic Centers in 'The Displaced Person,'" in *The Process of Fiction*, 2nd ed., ed. Barbara McKenzie [NY: Harcourt-Brace, Jovanovich, 1974], p. 445). Flying in from nowhere, the peacock may represent the loss of spiritual qualities in the town.

19. Gradisca's dress and behavior in the film, and the incident which creates her nickname, make the term "prostitute" seem appropriate to her. She parades down the street like Madame Dora's recruits in their carriage and a frequently reprinted still (the shot does not actually appear in the film) shows Gradisca framed between the whores. Fellini in his reminiscences refers to her as "the prostitute Gradisca." (See "Rimini, my home town," in *Fellini on Fellini* ([N. Y.]: Delacorte Press, 1976), pp. 9, 25-28, 142.)

20. See Marcus, p. 420.

21. Fellini, "Amarcord," p. 25.

22. Murray, p. 223.

23. Rosenthal, p. 166.

24. Fellini, "Amarcord," p. 25.