

TO DISCOVER THAT THERE IS NOTHING TO DISCOVER:  
IMAGINATION, THE OPEN, AND THE MOVIES OF FEDERICO FELLINI

By

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A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE COUNCIL OF  
THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

1978

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David L. Lavery

For Lee Bluestein (1938-1968) and John F. Reinhardt,  
who first showed me the Journey Out and Back  
and taught me to endure it.

For W. R. R., Taylor, my parents, Carol, Joyce, and Susan.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I think I have told you, but if I have not, you must have understood, that a man who has a vision is not able to use the power of it until after he has performed the vision on earth for the people to see.

### Black Elk

In the rites of passage of many native American peoples it is common for a young man, approaching maturity, to embark on a vision quest into the wilderness in search of a message or revelation on which he might shape his existence. I would like to think of the following work as such a vision quest, and I wish here to thank those who were responsible in their various ways for helping me complete the quest.

W. R. Robinson introduced me to Fellini and to the movies and taught me to see as well as an amblyopic blind person like myself could hope to.

Taylor Scott brought me, I hope, back to earth, pronouncing, like Guido's producer, the magic words, "Down, definitely down," when I most needed to hear them.

Sid Homan, Motley Deakin, and Ben Pickard showed their understanding and patience with my viscissitudes and allowed me to finish this creature.

John F. Reinhardt, because of a promise made to him, gave me the courage to finish; my moral debt is to him.

Phil Kuhn helped to discover the poet in me.

My students were a constant inspiration.

Joyce Kling was and always will be my angel.



And the contributions of my wife Susan go beyond all words to describe: for all she has done, she deserves nothing more than the Open.

I also wish to thank W. W. Norton and Company and Harper and Row Publishers for their permission to quote from their publications.

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## KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

### Works by Martin Heidegger:

<u>BT</u>	. . . .	<u>Being and Time</u>
<u>"CCP"</u>	. . . .	<u>"Conversation on a Country Path About Thinking"</u>
<u>DT</u>	. . . .	<u>Discourse on Thinking</u>
<u>EB</u>	. . . .	<u>Existence and Being</u>
<u>EP</u>	. . . .	<u>The End of Philosophy</u>
<u>IM</u>	. . . .	<u>Introduction to Metaphysics</u>
<u>OWL</u>	. . . .	<u>On the Way to Language</u>
<u>PLT</u>	. . . .	<u>Poetry, Language, Thought</u>
<u>QT</u>	. . . .	<u>The Question Concerning Technology</u>

### Works by Maurice Merleau-Ponty:

<u>VI</u>	. . . .	<u>The Visible and the Invisible</u>
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### Works by Rainer Maria Rilke:

<u>DE</u>	. . . .	<u>Duino Elegies</u>
<u>SO</u>	. . . .	<u>Sonnets to Orpheus</u>

### Works by Wallace Stevens:

<u>CP</u>	. . . .	<u>Collected Poems</u>
<u>NA</u>	. . . .	<u>The Necessary Angel</u>
<u>OP</u>	. . . .	<u>Opus Posthumous</u>

So far as we know, the tiny fragments of the universe embodied in man are the only centres of thought and responsibility in the visible world. If that be so, the appearance of the human mind has been so far the ultimate stage in the awakening of the world; and all that has gone before, the strivings of a myriad of centres that have taken the risks of living and believing, seem to have all been pursuing, along rival lines, the aim now achieved by us up to this point. They are all akin to us. For all these centres--those which led up to our own existence and the far more numerous others which produced different lines of which many are extinct--may be seen engaged in the same endeavor towards ultimate liberation. We may envisage then a cosmic field which called forth all these centres by offering them a short-lived, limited, hazardous opportunity for making some progress of their own towards an unthinkable consummation.

Michael Polanyi, Personal Knowledge

The solution of the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of this problem. (Is not this the reason why men to whom after long doubting the sense of life became clear, could not then say wherein this sense consisted?)

Ludwig Wittgenstein

I obtained not the least thing from unexcelled, complete awakening, and for this reason it is called "unexcelled, complete awakening."

Buddha

The acute intelligence of the imagination, the illimitable resources of its memory, its power to possess the moment it perceives--if we were speaking of light itself, and thinking of the relationship between objects and light, no further demonstration would be necessary. Like light, it adds nothing, except itself.

Wallace Stevens

FELLINIESQUE

Consummation of the poet

then the passage winds describe  
to breadcrumbs in his iris,  
ambit of quicksilver re-memberings,  
the center-ring agreements,

inventions of the sesame  
(Asa Nisi Masa):  
"where the eyes move"  
in amarcord's serenade . . .

"true friends" guide,  
clowns of angelic exercise,  
the tour of la strada  
vouching "Buena sera!"--

the mother pedagogy, like  
a peacock's benediction--  
Auguste reconnoiterings,  
grotesque sagas

of confessed misogyny,  
prodigal from wrapping sheets  
and afraid of being happy,  
ascend trees wanting woman--

her glance of shy epiphany

"there the treasures are" . . .  
little hands of spring  
in seminars of weather  
the photogenic seasons.

Nothing to say

6/25/78

Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate Council  
of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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August, 1978

Chairman: William R. Robinson  
Major Department: English

The following is a study of the development of the imagination of Federico Fellini. It is a hermeneutical attempt to interpret Fellini's films as personal visions, revelations of an evolving orientation to the world in the experience of their director. It is founded upon a conception of creativity drawn from the thought of Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Wallace Stevens, developed in an attempt to understand what Fellini's fellow director Lina Wertmuller meant when she proclaimed that, "When you work with Federico, you can only learn to discover that there is nothing to discover." Chapter One, Fellini: Major Man, explains briefly this theory of creativity, examines Fellini's own thinking on his art, and suggests that Fellini be understood as a "major man," as Wallace Stevens described him, a character "beyond/ Reality, composed thereof." Here as well the place in the "topology of Being" in which the discovery that there is nothing to discover holds sway is renamed the Open, following the description of Rainer Maria Rilke, and the purpose of the dissertation is established: to search for this "place" in the works of Fellini, following the growth of his art, seeking out what Heidegger called the "overarching poem" which lies behind the entire creative output of an artist and attempting to describe its message hermeneutically. Chapter Two, The Ways of the

Flesh, traces the presence of various "eternal recurrences" that appear again and again in Fellini's work, failure, the elements, the grotesque, madmen and clowns, children, inside/outside, and the face-to-face, showing them to be the ground against which his movie narratives develop and the Open is secured. All of his films are considered and the function of each of these facets of his imagination is determined. Chapter Three, Juliet of the Spirits: From Love to Autochthony, studies in depth Fellini's 1965 color film as the first real vision of the Open. Chapter Four, Amarcord: A "Celebration of the Light," analyzes that 1973 movie as a full narrative attainment of the Open. Chapter Five, The Open, attempts to explicate Wertmuller's insight about Fellini based upon the preceding discussion of his films and to describe phenomenologically the nature of the Open as revealed by Fellini's art. A lexicon and five appendices follow which seek to provide a grounding for my discussion of Fellini's cinematic imagination. Each expands upon subjects only briefly discussed in the text, the nature of creativity, the "more than rational distortion" (Wallace Stevens), Saying (Martin Heidegger), the flesh (Merleau-Ponty), and the movies as an art of mimicry, and they may be read either before or after the exposition in the body of the work. A filmography of Fellini's works and an extensive bibliography, drawn from both the body and the appendices, complete the work.



## CHAPTER ONE

### FELLINI: MAJOR MAN

A flight of fantasy, whether in dreams or daydreams, is no mere sleight of mind. But only children will accept it as being equally as profound as the arbitrary awareness we are taught to regard as reality, and hence, only they are nurtured by it. Later, of course, many of us comprehend our self-imposed poverty and try to double back, but the bread crumbs are always missing and our failures are immense. A true belief in the validity of non-ordinary reality--with all that it can teach us--seems beyond the capabilities of every practicing adult, with the possible exception of Federico Fellini.

Garry Trudeau

I have invented myself entirely: a childhood, a personality, longings, dreams, and memories, all in order to enable me to tell them.

One's film is like a naked man. I am compelled to be sincere in my films.

Federico Fellini

When Lina Wertmuller was asked in an interview to explain what she had learned from her apprenticeship under Federico Fellini (she had been an assistant director on 8 1/2), she replied: "When you work with Federico you can only discover that there's nothing to discover."<sup>1</sup>

This seems a strange answer indeed. The statement is a paradox, a contradiction. How can one discover that there is nothing to discover? Fellini, after all, is typically thought of by his critics as a baroque fantasist, an egotistical purveyor of generally personal and autobiographical visions whose meanings are often totally enigmatic.

David Thomson, to cite an extreme example, has assaulted Fellini as "an obsessional, vacuous poseur . . . a half-baked, play-acting pessimist, with no capacity for tragedy," whose films are a "doodling in chaos."<sup>2</sup> As a personality, moreover, he is perhaps the most outlandish and controversial among modern directors and is considered to be almost a pathological liar. Although he attempts to refute the charge by pointing out that it is absurd to accuse a man of lying whose business it is to tell stories and by insisting that "people are worth more than the truth,"<sup>3</sup> even his own wife, Giulietta Masina, has claimed that "Federico only blushes when he tells the truth." And Fellini himself has proclaimed the need for "a cine-mendacity" to replace cinema verite because "A lie is always more interesting. . . ."<sup>4</sup> How can a man renowned all over the world for his flights of imagination teach one to discover that there is nothing to discover? Wertmuller's statement, which might at first glance be taken as the thesis of a common sense realism but hardly as the basis for a philosophy of imagination, appears to be as puzzling as one of Fellini's own images, devoid as it is of any additional commentary or explanation. Cryptic and perplexing, it is like a Zen koan, the solution of which might enlighten our perception of Fellini's films. But it seems initially to suggest that at least in Wertmuller's eyes Fellini is not an artist lost in a world of his own invention, as his critics would have it, but rather a kind of "realist of the imagination" in some sense. But in what sense? Exactly what process did Wertmuller glimpse at work in Fellini's creative genius?

Fellini has often complained that his critics lack respect, seeing him with "indiscreet eyes," and has insisted that their practices are alien to his own desire never to criticize.<sup>5</sup> He has asked for a less objective, less external criticism of his movies, reminding that

A truly humble critic would look at things from the inside, not from the outside. 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.<sup>6</sup>

Such a plea seems justifiable from a director who has claimed again and again that his movies are inseparable functions of his own growth.

Fellini once explained to Pierre Kast that all his films contain a certain "figure in the carpet" which it is the business of the critics to get at:

At bottom, I am always making the same film, I am telling the story of characters in quest of themselves, in search of a more authentic source of life, of conduct, of behavior, that will more closely relate to the true roots of their individuality.<sup>7</sup>

And foremost among those "characters" is himself. All art, he has acknowledged, is autobiographical; "the pearl is the oyster's autobiography."<sup>8</sup> Consequently, the "figure in the carpet" has a still deeper significance for him:

My work can't be anything other than a testimony of what I am looking for in life. It is a mirror of my searching. . . . For myself freed. In this respect, I think, there is no cleavage or difference of content or style in all my films. From first to last, I have struggled to free myself from the past, from the education laid upon me as a child. (Playboy, p. 58)

In Fellini's own eyes, then, his art and life are so inextricably intertwined, so much an integral part of a single "seamless web" of experience/imagination, that

Making a film is something quite other . . . than a simple professional fact. It's a way of realizing myself, and giving my life a meaning. That's why, when you ask me which of my films I prefer, I'm stuck. I don't know what to say. I don't consider my films as professional facts; if I did so, I might be able to look at them objectively enough to say: this one seems more of a success than that. But as it is, I find getting into such a detached position absolutely impossible. The way I want to speak about a film is, not to say what I'm expressing in it, but the stages of my life I passed through while making it. I have just the same difficulty as I would if somebody asked me "Which do you prefer, your military career, or your marriage, your first love, or meeting your first friend?" They are all facts of my life. <sup>9</sup> I like it all, it's my life and consequently I can't choose.

Fellini's work is, therefore, the instrument of a personal evolution. Like Yeats, Fellini knows well that in his elaborate, "obsessional" working and re-working of his favorite themes and images, his personal iconography, it is himself that he remakes.

As such, Fellini's art would seem to require what J. Hillis Miller has described as a "loving criticism." "The proper model for the relation of the critic to the work he studies," Miller suggests, "is not that of a scientist to physical objects but that of one man to another in charity." Love is the true paradigm for the critical act because only "Love wants the other as he is, in all his recalcitrant peculiarity. As St. Augustine puts it, the lover says to the loved one, 'Volat ut sis'--'I wish you to be.'"<sup>10</sup> In order to allow Fellini's films to "be" then, in order to discover them as a prerequisite to revealing the sense of discovery which they exhibit, it is essential that they be seen as personal visions, not merely judged and condemned as cinematic ravings, as the David Thomsons, John Simons, and Pauline Kaels have done. They are, it is true, supreme tests of a critic's love, by Miller's standards, for they surpass the works of nearly all other modern filmmakers in their "recalcitrant peculiarity" and general grotesqueness, and yet within them is at work, almost invisibly, Fellini's

own tacit presence before the world, his evolving discovery that there is nothing to discover in fact, if Lina Wertmuller's insight is truly perceptive. Could it be then that the "figure in the carpet" in Fellini's films is really his own artistic discovery that there is nothing to discover?

Fellini has proclaimed again and again in his interviews and published writings a commitment to his own sense of wonder, to, as he puts it, "anything that tends to restore man to a stature that is more vast, more mysterious even, and more anguished, but in any case, neither pacifying nor consoling" (Kast, p. 185). For the "real," he has explained, is not what we assume it to be; it

is neither an enclosure nor a panorama that has just a single surface. A landscape, for example, has several textures, and the deepest, the one that can be revealed only by poetry, is no less real. It is said that what I wish to show behind the epiderm of things and people is the unreal. It is called my taste for the mysterious. I shall readily accept this description if you will use a capital "M." For me, the mysterious is man, the long, irrational lines of his spiritual life, love, salvation. . . . For me, the key to the mystery--which is to say, God--is to be found at the center of the successive layers of reality. . . . (Murray, p. 35)

Art's allegiance, Fellini insists, is therefore not to the "real," but to those "long, irrational lines" which constitute the true reality.<sup>11</sup>

The authentic artist then is a "visionary," and conversely only visionary art is realistic, as Fellini explained to Charles Samuels:

For me the only real artist is the visionary because he bears witness to his own reality. A visionary--Van Gogh, for instance--is a profound realist. That wheat field with the black sun is his; only he saw it. There can't be greater realism. (Samuels, p. 126)

That Fellini himself is such a visionary is not to be doubted. Ingmar Bergman, for example, testified to the visionary genius of his fellow filmmaker as a defense against John Simon's accusation that Fellini is "not . . . honest." Fellini, Bergman insisted,

is not honest, he is not dishonest, he is just Fellini . . . he has no limits; he's just like quicksilver--all over the place. I have never seen anybody like that before. . . . He is enormously intuitive; he is creative; he is an enormous force. He is burning inside with such heat. Collapsing. . . . The heat from his creative mind, it melts him. . . . He is rich.<sup>12</sup>

And he has himself explained that "If I wander around the world looking at things it is only to reassure myself that the world I have invented is true."<sup>13</sup>

Yet Fellini has also insisted that he is "completely incapable of inventing."<sup>14</sup> Like William Blake, who claimed that "I see Every thing I paint In This World," Fellini would deny that his creations are the product of some secondary process. For him, imagination and perception are indistinguishable. As the artist and experimental filmmaker Hans Richter saw when he visited the set of Fellini-Satyricon, Fellini "creates the way he sees."<sup>15</sup> Fellini's imagination thus would seem to be like that envisioned by Wallace Stevens in his "Adagia": the attainment of

a degree of perception at which what is real and what is imagined are one: a state of clairvoyant observation, accessible<sup>16</sup> or possibly accessible to the poet, or, say, the acutest poet.

All such "acutest poets" are, Stevens thought, "major men," men in whom the real and the imagined are fused as one:

All men are brave  
All men endure. . . .  
The major men--  
That is different. They are characters beyond  
Reality, composed thereof.<sup>17</sup>

Might not Fellini the artist be just such a "major man," in his works incorporating the real and the imaginary in such a way that they become the narrative paradigms of a reality in which the prime discovery is that there is nothing to discover?

That Fellini's "seamless web" of experience/imagination marks him as an eccentric in the modern age is a result of what Martin Heidegger

calls the "enframing" disposition of the human intellect in this "age of the world picture" and of "the oblivion of Being." According to Heidegger's thought, the modern age now no longer feels the presence of the world, for it has been "stored-away" by our calculative technology in such a way that it is readily available but devoid of any Being.<sup>18</sup> "Today," William Lovitt comments, "all things are being swept together in a vast network in which their only meaning lies in their being available to serve some end that will itself also be directed toward getting everything under control."<sup>19</sup> In "the age of the world picture," Heidegger has shown, even art itself is reduced to being merely an object for academic aesthetics instead of being seen as the primary human activity of response to the disclosures, the aletheia, or truth of physis, as it was for the Greeks, a people who lived, as Heidegger demonstrates, "exposed" and open to that which is. But for Fellini as "major man," art is still the primal working of reality, the making present of what is to him within his almost overwhelming sense of wonder before his unframed world.

Perhaps no other art is as potentially dependent on this work as is the movies.<sup>20</sup> The work of the movie auteur is this incessant transformation of a personal world into a public experience or spectacle, the making explicit, through the direction of actors, movement, and gestures, the staging of scenes, lighting, color, and cinematography, and all the huge labors of production, of an essentially tacit sense of the presence of the "real" in his experience and imagination. And no better example of a complete auteur exists than Fellini, who is responsible for his movies on the levels of the script, the scenic design, and the entire realization. All accounts of Fellini on the set of a movie, of his sometimes wildly improvisational nature and his tyrannical

command over the production,<sup>21</sup> seem to suggest the validity of his own statement:

I have to say--with all gratitude to those who work with me--that I consider myself father and mother of my films. I am helped by knowledgeable obstetricians and faithful friends, but the conception is mine alone. (Murray, p. 19)

His co-workers refer to the making of a Fellini film as "the daily miracle,"<sup>22</sup> and Dominique Delouche has claimed that Fellini is "one of the few directors who conceives of inspiration as being a sacred phenomenon"; his films, Delouche explains, "are never created out of separate components, the way a simple craftsman would work, but around this special nucleus of inspiration, this alpha, this starting spark, by a radiant, explosive procedure" (quoted in Salachas, p. 200; my italics).

Fellini's muse is, however, very demanding. To every question concerning why he has shot a particular scene in a particular way he has always given the same answer: "I had to shoot it that way." For Fellini feels deeply the demands of "that artistic fatality that is independent of any explanation" (Samuels, pp. 120, 124). (If we accept Juan Ramon Jimenez' distinction that there are two kinds of art: "voluntaria"--works make out of a conscious, willful decision to create; and "necessaria"--works which demand to be created,<sup>23</sup> then Fellini's films would most certainly have to be classified as "necessaria.") In making a film, Fellini has even gone so far as to insist, "Everything goes ahead as if, at the beginning, there was an agreement between the film that is to be born and me. As if the finished film already existed quite outside me, just as--on a very different scale--the law of gravity existed before Newton discovered it" (Strich, p. 104).

Fellini's inspiration, his "alpha," the source of his creativity, is not, then, a demon which grants to him a vision of some transcendent



realm, but an angel rather, one like Wallace Stevens describes in "Angel Surrounded by Paysans," "The necessary angel of earth," with whose sight one is able to "see earth again" (CP, p. 496). This angel Fellini has encountered throughout his career, as he has described:

One day I met an angel who stretched out his hand to me. I followed him, but after a short time I left him and went back. He stopped and waited at the same place for me. I see him again in difficult moments and he says to me, "Wait, wait," just as I do to everyone. I am afraid that when I call him one day, I shall not find him. It is the angel who has always awakened me from my spiritual torpor. When I was a boy, he was the incarnation of an imaginary world, and then he became the symbol of a vital moral need. (Murray, p. 75; my italics)

Although Fellini is a world renown liar, it is, I think, absolutely essential that he be taken literally here, just as Dylan Thomas asked that his poetry be always taken literally. For since Fellini lies, as Jose de Vilallonga has observed, "from the bottom of his heart" (Vilallonga, p. 94), the existence of his angel is no mere flight of fantasy. This angel (or its many homologues) makes its presence felt repeatedly in Fellini's films: in the stolen angel statue in I Vitelloni, in Il Matto in La Strada (who is first seen wearing angel wings), in Paolo in La Dolce Vita (identified by Marcello as an angel), in the plethora of spirits in Juliet of the Spirits, and in the Fratellini Brothers' performance as angels in The Clowns. As an entity in his imagination, therefore, the angel seems to be of real significance.

Nor has Fellini alone among twentieth century artists experienced this angel's presence. For whatever it might be, it has appeared again and again as the muse of twentieth century artists, as the grandmother in William Carlos Williams' "The Wanderer," who teaches the poet the necessity of the plunge into the "filthy Passaic" of experience;<sup>24</sup> as

the "Apparition" which hovers over so many of the canvases of Marc Chagall;<sup>25</sup> in Rainer Maria Rilke's Duino Elegies, to whom it is specifically addressed;<sup>26</sup> and throughout the poetry and prose of Wallace Stevens, most notably near the end of "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven" in the form of an "hidalgo" who haunts the periphery of the poet's eye:

Life fixed him, wandering on the stair of glass,  
With its attentive eyes. And, as he stood,  
On his balcony, outsensing distances,

There were looks that caught him out of empty air.  
C'est toujours la vie qui me regarde . . . This was  
Who watched him, always, for unfaithful thought.

This sat beside his bed, with its guitar,  
To keep him from forgetting without a word,  
A note or two disclosing who it was.

Nothing about him ever stayed the same,  
Except this hidalgo and his eye and tune,  
The shawl across one shoulder and the hat.

The commonplace became a rumpling of blazons.  
(CP, p. 483, my italics)

Everywhere that it appears, and here especially, this angel enacts a transformation in the artist of the quotidian, the repetitive, and the necessary into the imaginative, bringing a discovery that there is nothing to discover, a realization that the new is inseparable from the ordinary, and watching the artist for "unfaithful thought," that is, for imagination which seeks to go beyond the immanent. This angel is for these creative minds the one constant ("Nothing about him ever stayed the same,/Except this hidalgo and his eye and tune . . ."), that to which they turn for awakening, as Fellini explains, in times of "spiritual torpor." But why does this angel of the twentieth century bring revelations of immanence? Why is it as well a "necessary angel" whose presence is unchanging and incessant? Why, in Fellini's case, does it wait behind the creator, as if the artist's imagination were prodigal?

To answer these questions might perhaps lead to the discovery of Wertmuller's insight into Fellini's genius.

At the end of "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," Wallace Stevens finds another name for this angel of the creative impulse and another, de-mythologized way of explaining its presence. After the difficult passage of the poem progresses beyond an initial disgust with the ordinary and repetitive (the "granite monotony" of natural sounds of the second section) and returns from the "nothingness . . ./Beyond which thought could not progress as thought" (CP, p. 403) where the Canon Aspirin had ventured, the poet finds himself at last face-to-face with the "Fat girl, terrestrial," of the earth. He desires to name her then definitively, to check her "evasions," to find at last a fictive description of her which would be supreme, making her glorious irrationality finally rational. But the project fails, for the earth remains for him always to be found "in difference . . ./In a moving contour, a change not quite completed," which becomes in turn the source of all future human fictions and all creativity. Defeated, the poet is left to praise her generative powers as muse:

You remain the more than natural figure. You  
Become the soft-footed phantom, the irrational

Distortion, however fragrant, however dear.  
That's it: the more than rational distortion,  
The fiction that results from feeling.  
(CP, p. 406; my italics)

This "more than rational distortion," as Stevens describes it, is but a more precise designation for the "necessary angel of the earth" (for a more detailed analysis of the more than rational distortion in Stevens' thought, see Appendix II). Like all angels (as the word's etymology reveals), it is a messenger, for it brings to those who heed its

promptings what Martin Heidegger has described as the "greetings of the serene" which he calls "Saying."<sup>27</sup> Harold Rosenberg once observed, with Stevens' poem in mind, that modern art has increasingly become a taking of "notes" toward the transformation of reality.<sup>28</sup> And are not all notes of the more than rational distortion, of events in the visible creation experienced with wonder in such a way that the ordinary gloss or description of reality momentarily dissolves and a hint, a Saying, of another possible reality takes its place, is noted, and stored by the imagination for the making of future fictions? (Appendix I attempts to provide a "metaphysic" for this conception of creativity.)

The English verb "to say" is derived from an Indo-European root word which meant "to note, see, show, say" (the same root of the verb "to see"), and Martin Heidegger uses the word in full consciousness of its etymological significance and its implications for his philosophy. For Heidegger, it is as if Saying is noting, seeing, showing, and saying, all constituted in one act, as they once might well have normally been.<sup>29</sup> For Saying is almost an element in itself; we can understand it, he insists, only because we "belong within it" (OWL, p. 124). But it is even more; for the "essential being of language is Saying as Showing."<sup>30</sup> Saying "pervades everywhere our stay on this earth and our journey in it" (OWL, p. 84), and yet Saying is not the sole property of human activity; rather "Self-showing appearance is the mark of the presence and absence of everything present, of every kind and rank" (OWL, p. 123). For Saying, Heidegger explains, is precisely the name for that which

sets all present beings free into their given presence, and brings what is absent into their absence. Saying pervades and structures the openness of that clearing which every appearance must seek out and every disappearance must leave behind, and in which every present or absent being must show, say, announce itself. (OWL, p. 126)

(Appendix III provides an explanation of the place of Saying in the context of Heidegger's thought as a whole.)

Since it comes from that "clearing," Saying is a "breath for nothing," in that it is not humanly purposive, not essentially a fueling of forward-thrusting human reason, and not immediately susceptible to calculative "enframing," for it is a revelation of Being in such a way that "we can say no more of beings than that they are."<sup>31</sup> Saying announces what Heidegger has called the earth's "refusal," that point at which things refuse to disclose themselves entirely, remaining "uncanny" because they retain their integral mystery (PLT, pp. 53-54). It brings news on the behalf of the "mere nothing of what is," and it is the poet who takes note of such news. But where and how are such notes taken? Phenomenologically, what is it in the creative genius to which the angel of Saying addresses itself?

Saying is seen because it is phenomenal. The word "phenomenal" can of course mean "of or constituting a phenomenon or phenomena." But "phenomenal" also means "extremely unusual, extraordinary, remarkable." Its meaning is almost Janus-like; in one sense it refers to the quality of the ordinary, of phenomena; in another sense it describes the very source of mystery. The word is originally derived from Greek phaos (light) and apophansis (speech), and William Barrett has observed that the best literal translation of the word would probably be "revelation-light-language." For to the Greeks, language was in the light and a phenomenon was "that which reveals itself." They lived in the midst of a relation between language and statement which was not, as we tend to think in our abstractness, a metaphor.<sup>32</sup> This relation is Saying. It is a relation in which man no longer experiences the visible as something which lies without, but rather as something "coming from without,"

to use the distinction established by the music theorist Victor Zuckerkandl. Zuckerkandl has described music's greatness as being not its "leading us to otherwise inaccessible insights" but instead its ability to bring to us "patently" what "elsewhere, can be made accessible only by laborious speculation, and then only uncertainly and insecurely. . . ." In music, Zuckerkandl suggests, "what other phenomena conceal itself becomes phenomenon; in music, what is inmost to the world is turned outward."<sup>33</sup> Saying is phenomenal in the same way. In it is made patent not transcendental insight but only a secure revelation of the Being of a thing patently within perception itself. In Saying phenomena become "phenomenal."

The wisdom contained in the etymology of "to say," the Saying of the verb itself, is thus primordial, as is Heidegger's utilization of it in his thinking. For Saying is nothing other than the means of originary orientation in which the phenomenal more than rational distortion works its influence upon embodied human vision; and it is, therefore, a seeing, the source of language (for all but those cart-before-the-horse believers in idealism), and a showing as well when the more than rational distortion presents itself within a work of art (of which it was the real source to begin with) as the Saying of the work.

In art, Heidegger has observed, Saying manifests itself most fully as "the stream of stillness which in forming them joins its own two banks--the Saying and our saying after it" (OWL, pp. 124-125). As an art form, the movies, an art in which both words and images carry the narrative and, therefore, one in which the "see/say/show" process can achieve full fruition, would seem potentially capable of allowing this "stream of stillness" full sway, and thereby of narrating the

saga (the word has its etymology in the verb "to say") of the way which Saying, as a "breath for nothing," hints of: they would show the evolution of the discovery that there is nothing to discover. For the discovery and heeding of Saying as guidance of the way brings the world near. (That Saying and nearness are the same, seemed to Heidegger a "flagrant impossibility," but one which he hoped would "not be softened in the least"; OWL, p. 95.) For Saying, unlike propositional logic or rational discourse, is embodied, making its presence felt tacitly within the flesh, as the French philosopher of perception Maurice Merleau-Ponty conceived it.

Merleau-Ponty came to believe at the end of his life that the source of creativity lay in "the baroque proliferation of generating axes for visibility" in the eye itself, and surely he was correct.<sup>34</sup> For it is along these axes that the world's Saying is converted into the objective, ordered uniformity of conscious experience; it is here that the raw, unglossed image of the world becomes, under the sway of what Heidegger calls the "ought," the stereotyped image that fuels reason; and it is here, therefore, that the more than rational distortion, a dissonance in the visible, is prehended by the artist, later to become the power source for his art.<sup>35</sup>

Does not the eye itself also store these dissonances? Annie Dillard, in Pilgrim at Tinker Creek, tells of how when she was a child she had a strange misconception about her own anatomy, believing that the body possessed an "eye-pouch":

When I was young I thought that all human beings had an organ inside each lower eyelid which caught things that got in the eye. I don't know where I imagined I'd learned this piece of anatomy. Things got in my eye, and then they went away, so I supposed that they had fallen into my eye-pouch. This eye-pouch

was a slender, thin-walled purse, equipped with frail digestive powers that enabled it eventually to absorb eyelashes, strands of fabric, bits of grit, and anything else that might stray into the eye.

Later, of course, she explains, she learned that the "existence of this eye-pouch . . . was all in my mind." Yet she refused to surrender her belief in its reality, and she comes to see it instead as a "brain-pouch, catching and absorbing small bits that fall deeply into my open eye." This metaphoric relocation which Dillard undertook as she matured is not, however, necessary. The eye itself stores the "tiny bits" which fall into it. It is itself a reservoir of creativity within the world's flesh, as twentieth century poets have always noted.

Dylan Thomas once claimed that

It is my aim as an artist . . . to bring . . . wonder into myself, to prove beyond doubt to myself that the flesh that covers me is the flesh that covers the sun, that the blood in my lungs is the blood that goes up and down in a tree.<sup>37</sup>

And Wallace Stevens noted in "Tattoo" that:

The webs of your eyes  
Are fastened  
To the flesh and bones of you  
As to rafters or grass.

There are filaments of your eyes  
On the surfaces of water  
And in the edges of the snow. (CP, p. 81)

Like Thomas and Stevens, Merleau-Ponty thought of man's intertwining with the primal aseity of the visible in terms of flesh.

For Merleau-Ponty, human vision is a "lacuna," a pool lying deep in our eyes which needs to be filled with the experience of the visible.<sup>38</sup> The reason why, contrary to all good common sense, our vision seems to come from the things seen is that the visible is a "talisman" which imposes itself upon the seer as if it were a continuation of himself (VI, p. 131). One looks at things as if there were a "pre-established harmony" between the seer and the seen; vision thus seems



to be a "prepossession" (VI, p. 133). Because his vision is a "central cavity" which longs to make of man a seer, in man's life,

everything comes to pass . . . as though the physiology of vision did not succeed in closing the nervous functioning in upon itself, since movements of fixation, or convergence, are suspended upon the advent of the body of a visible world for which they were supposed to furnish the explanation, as though, through all these channels, all those prepared but unemployed circuits, the current that will traverse them was rendered probable, in the long run inevitable; the current making of the embryo a newborn infant, of a visible a seer, and of a body a mind, or at least a flesh. (VI, pp. 146-7)

Wallace Stevens has provided a vivid image of how actual seeing fulfills this latent potential of vision's lacuna and utilizes the "unemployed circuits" of the eye in "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction." At the end of that poem's second section, the poet, sitting on a bench by a lake, finds himself surrounded by a "Theatre [literally, "a place to see"]/of Trope," in which he realizes as if for the first time the artificial workings of the supposedly natural scene. To him,

The west wind was the music, the motion, the force  
To which the swans curveted, a will to change,  
A will to make iris frettings on the blank. (CP, p. 397; my italics)

Stevens here portrays in miniature what Merleau-Ponty designates as the flesh. He images how the iris, that part of the eye containing the regulatory muscles which determine the amount of light which enters the pupil, becomes covered with "frettings," although it is initially a blank. That is, the iris becomes a network of coordinated movements and thereby a net within which the forces at work in the visible creation are caught and embodied, turning the primal blank, the eye which, as the philosopher Condillac once saw, initially is light rather than sees it, into all the complexity of mature seeing.<sup>39</sup> These frettings then are none other than the eye's routes, its always bodily orientation and accommodation to the presence of the visible; in making these frettings, reality is discovered.

It is man's immersion in this process Stevens describes which is Merleau-Ponty's flesh. The flesh, he informs us, is "an ultimate notion" (VI, p. 140). He refers to it as a "circle which I do not form, which forms me" (VI, p. 140) and describes it as "a sort of incarnate principle that brings a style of being wherever there is a fragment of being . . ." (VI, p. 139). To understand it totally he suggests it would be necessary to use the old term "element" and to think of the flesh as an element of being which gives to every fact its facticity (VI, pp. 139-40). The flesh, as such, "prevails over every ordinary discordance." Since it is man's bridge to what Merleau-Ponty calls "wild being" (Wallace Stevens' "vulgate"<sup>40</sup>), the flesh is, in fact, the primary source of all human ordering and imagining.<sup>41</sup>

The flesh then is for him "elemental being, self-positing posture, self-moving motion, adjusting itself to the routes and levels and axes of the visible."<sup>42</sup> It is "the dehiscence of the seeing into the visible and of the visible into the seeing" (VI, p. 153).<sup>43</sup> And in this "dehiscence" of being, this bursting open, the original contents, or seeds, are what I have called the more than rational distortion. The "eye-pouch" of a major man stores these seeds, from which are generated, through the mediation of art, new routes for visibility, new "iris frettings on the blank." (For a further explanation of the flesh as Merleau-Ponty described it, see Appendix IV.)

As this theory of the flesh as the source of creativity makes apparent, simple realism in art is insufficient, for it is not faithful to the creativity inherent in art's role in the process of dehiscence.<sup>44</sup> Thus for a visionary artist like Fellini, constructing fictions out of the contents of his eye-pouch, "realism" has always seemed unfaithful

to his imaginative experience of reality. Fellini did begin his career in the neo-realist movement, but he soon outgrew it. For as Andre Bazin clearly saw, with Nights of Cabiria (1956) Fellini took neo-realism as far as it could go and went "through it," as if through a wormhole in space, to emerge on the "other side" of realism.<sup>45</sup> The neo-realist director De Sica liked to speak of "My little sister reality," and Fellini's break with the movement was due to a temperamental reluctance to accept such an essentially maudlin, condescending attitude. For all of its genius, neo-realism was proprietary: the real was a little sister; man was the big brother who watched over it as if it needed a guardian and protector.

To Fellini's imagination, reality seems no little sister, but rather a "big mother" (just as to Stevens in "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction" it is a "Fat girl, terrestrial"), and from within her mystery he works her materials into form. Within that "big mother," he found it impossible to subscribe to the Rossellini neo-realist aesthetic of "Things are. Why manipulate them?" Instead, as Fellini has suggested, as a filmmaker he came to realize that: "Every detail is an opening onto a world of its own. You may see a tiny tail poking out through a hole, tug at it, and out comes an elephant" (Strich, p. 104). Neo-realism never pulled the tail which is, in effect, the more than rational distortion. Fellini, however, pulled again and again with his imagination and thereby created movies which actualized cinema's great power to not only "condition the beat of the heart, the breathing of the lungs . . ." but "change more profound rhythms on the level of our imagination and feelings."<sup>46</sup> Consequently, his movies bring to fruition a process which Andre Bazin erroneously believed would be culminated in the work of De Sica and Zavattini, the attempt to

make cinema the asymptote of reality--but in order that it should ultimately be life itself that becomes spectacle, in order that life might in this perfect mirror be visible poetry, be the self into which film finally changes it. (Bazin, II, 83; my italics)

As this "asymptote of reality," the movies of Fellini are the work of what I will call mimicry; that is to say, they are not a copy or an imitation, not mimesis as the West has thought of it since the Greeks, but rather part of an evolutionary transformation (as Rainer Maria Rilke described it: see Appendix V) which serves an almost biological function of adaptation and accommodation to the ways of the earth, or, as I will call it in Chapter Two, the "ways of the flesh." For the flesh, as Merleau-Ponty defined it, is the true "big mother" within which the Saying of the more than rational distortion becomes incarnate in works of art in order that, in the case of film, "life might . . . be visible poetry" to accommodated eyes trained by its showing forth of the mother's ways.

That Fellini's works are an art of mimicry and a discovery that there is nothing to discover, and not merely the product of a wild fancy, Lina Wertmuller seems to have intuitively discerned. She seems to have sensed in Fellini's imagination the presence of the "necessary angel," and her insight into Fellini's method becomes therefore a wonderfully generative "seed crystal,"<sup>47</sup> the exploration of which should clarify not only our perception of Fellini's films, but our understanding of the nature and function of human imagination as well. The journey toward such a clarification, which is in reality the solution of Wertmuller's koan carried out through an examination of Fellini's work in search of the presence of the discovery that there is nothing to discover, will be necessarily a complex one, but I am convinced that the light at the end of the tunnel, and at the end of this essay, like

the light which Guido sees ahead in the opening sequence of 8 1/2, will provide, when experienced firsthand, enough illumination to justify the "difficulty of the passage"; for that light is the Open.

This primary search-image with which I will explore Fellini's films is the paradigm of the poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke, to whose understanding of the term I am greatly indebted. Rilke once attempted to explain what he meant by the Open in a letter to his Russian translator in this way:

the animal is in the world; we stand before it by virtue of that peculiar turn and intensification which our consciousness has taken. By the "Open," therefore, I do not mean sky, air, and space; they, too, are "object" and thus "opaque" and closed to the man who observes and judges. The animal, the flower, presumably is all that, without accounting to itself, and therefore has before itself and above itself that indescribably open freedom which perhaps has its (extremely fleeting) equivalents among us only in those first moments of love when one human sees his own vastness in another, his beloved, and in man's elevation toward God.<sup>48</sup>

When Rilke speaks of a flower's being all that surrounds it, he means that, having no consciousness, no will, it is a receiver unshielded by any "violence" of its own which might serve as a defense against what Wallace Stevens liked to call "the pressure of reality."

In Sonnets to Orpheus, II, 5, Rilke presents a vivid image of all this in his description of an anemone.<sup>49</sup> The anemone is a flower which opens outward so fully during the daylight hours that it is sometimes unable to close itself up at night. In this, Rilke suggests, it is an open receiver to "the polyphonic light of the loud skies" in a way that man can never be, for man is violent, willful, assertive, closed to raw experience in order that he may be "longer lasting" than the poetically receptive anemone. As a result, man finds himself "turned

around," no longer in the world, but, rather, over-against it, as Rilke describes in the eighth Duino Elegy:

We've never, no, not for a single day,  
pure space before us, such as that which flowers  
endlessly open into; always world,  
and never nowhere without no: that pure,  
unsupervised element one breathes,  
endlessly knows, and never craves.<sup>50</sup>

But even within his violent alienation from the ways of the earth, the possibility of a future openness to the earth summons man's work toward the realization of a mirror-image of the initial unshieldedness of Rilke's anemone. In the Open, then, man would, as Heidegger has suggested, achieve his greatest goal, to feel "no need." "The pain which must first be experienced and borne out to the end" (both in the individual and in history itself) is, Heidegger writes,

the insight and the knowledge that lack of need is the highest and most hidden need. . . . Lack of need consists in believing that one has reality and what is real in one's grip and knows what truth is. . . .<sup>51</sup>

As I will show, the movies of Federico Fellini, from The White Sheik to Amarcord, represent in their development the experience and realization of the "highest need" of which Heidegger speaks and of the pain which must be endured to fulfill that need.

This achievement of no need Fellini's critics have misconstrued almost laughably as "a fatalistic resignation to the human condition," to use one interviewer's assessment of the nature of Guido's realization at the end of 8 1/2, or as his inability to attain a "true tragic vision." Fellini's reply to such unperceptive comments is revealing: to him, Guido's achievement is not a failure,

Not a fatalistic resignation, but an affirmative acceptance of life, a burgeoning love for life. The return of Guido to life in 8 1/2 is not a defeat. Rather it is the return of a victor. When he finally realizes that he will never be able to resolve his problems, only to live with them--when he realizes that life

itself is a continuous refutation of resolution--he experiences an exhilarating resurgence of energy, a return of profound religious sentiment. "I have faith," he says, "that I am inserted into a design of Providence whose end I don't and can't and never will comprehend--and wouldn't want to even if I could. There's nothing for me to do but pass through this panorama of joy and pain--with all my energy, all my enthusiasm, all my love, accepting it for what it is, without expecting an explanation that does not involve me, that I am not called upon to give. (Playboy, p. 61)

Guido's new understanding reveals a faith in the course of individuation, a triumphant "amor fati," as Nietzsche called it, unattainable for such earlier Fellini characters as Ivan in The White Sheik, all the vitelloni except Moraldo, Augusto in Il Bidone, Zampano in La Strada, and especially Marcello in La Dolce Vita, whose dissatisfaction with his disintegrating values is the very antithesis of Guido's tacit trust.<sup>52</sup>

Guido's unquestioning acceptance, his refusal to leave the earth in the spaceship prepared for him by his producer and his Cartesian writer Daumier, his final rejection of Claudia and the ideal and all symbolism, and his denial of failure, a homologue of Cabiria's miraculous return to life and "the way" at the end of Nights of Cabiria, such become increasingly the common destiny of later Fellini figures: Juliet in her garden at the end of Juliet of the Spirits, content with "the daily miracle of simple reality," comes most readily to mind.<sup>53</sup> This acceptance even becomes the guiding myth behind the strangely alien Fellini-Satyricon, at least in Fellini's own description:

Encolpio, Ascyrtos, Eumolpus, Giton, Lichas, Tryphaena . . . make their fabulous adventures relive, without glamorizing them as sadistic or erotic. Even if their adventures were sometimes so cruel as to be revolting by our standards, if they were obscene in such a grand and total way as to become innocent again, yet beyond their ferocity, their eroticism, they embody the eternal myth: man standing alone before the fascinating mystery of life, all its terror, its beauty, and its passion.<sup>54</sup>

And after its trying-out in the quasi-documentary films The Clowns and

Roma, in which Fellini himself is present as an active discoverer, it becomes co-equal with Fellini's own vision of reality in the autotelic narrative of Amarcord, where the discovery that there is nothing to discover discovers immanence even in human memory. That Fellini's films are a narrative evolution, a process of realization of "no need" inseparably interconnected with the evolution of human perception and imagination is my thesis, for the relationship of the discovery that there is nothing to discover to acute, fully embodied human perception is an angelic "interpenetration both ways."<sup>55</sup>

An ancient Zen Buddhist parable describes the necessary order of this evolution exactly, and its archetypal wisdom will serve here as a paradigmatic guide for my understanding. According to it, the student who undertakes the study of Zen, at first totally unaware of anything other than common sense reality, sees mountains as mountains, trees as trees, and rivers as rivers. While in the process of obtaining enlightenment, however, mountains are no longer mountains, trees no longer trees, and rivers no longer rivers; as in the emergence from the cave in Plato's famous allegory in The Republic, the physical world is seen as a mere shadow, a phantasm and a simulacrum which imprisons the upward, infinite reaching of out spirit. But after enlightenment, the parable continues, comes a third stage, almost unknown in the West, in which the student, a prodigal of the real, again sees mountains as mountains, trees as trees, rivers as rivers. Every human history, this parable implies, is a Journey Out and Back.<sup>56</sup> That this essentially circular sequence is inevitable in a complete human evolution is the cardinal principle of all Zen Buddhist thought, but its narration of the process of individuation is implicit in the thought of the West as well.

Martin Heidegger, who at the end of his life came to embrace many Zen-like ideas and perceptions, has provided a possible explanation of



why our evolution must occur, individually and historically, in just this manner. For Heidegger, the "oblivion of Being" (his name for the first stage in the Zen parable) is absolutely essential to the establishment of individuality for all existing things (figures) from out of the ground of Being:

This Fate, which is to be thought in the manner of the history of Being, is, however, necessary, because Being itself can open out in its truth the difference of Being and beings preserved in itself only when the difference explicitly takes place. But how can it do this if beings have not first entered the most extreme oblivion of Being, and if at the same time Being has not taken over its unconditional dominance, metaphysically incomprehensible, as the will to will which asserts itself at first and uniquely through the sole preexistence of beings (of what is objectively real) over Being? (EP, p. 91)

This most difficult of passages must remain for the moment uninterpreted; but suffice it to say that it contains a philosophy of history without which nothing that I have to say about Fellini will make much sense. Fellini's development as an artist, his discovery that there is nothing to discover, will be plotted using this process of individuation of human experience as a basis for orientation.

The following chapters might best be labeled, if a label is necessary, as a "thinking" in Martin Heidegger's sense of the term. Heidegger has observed that thinking's real goal is not the attainment of Truth or the disciplining of our rationality. It is rather that activity with which we "cut furrows into the soil of Being";<sup>56</sup> it is ultimately a "coming into the nearness of distance,"<sup>57</sup> the way of our own releasement to the ways of the earth: our realization of no need. The word itself, Heidegger reminds in a moving passage, has etymological roots in the verb "to thank" ("CCP," p. 85). Thinking is therefore both an infinite resignation and a grace in itself; it is a reception

of a gift. My purpose here must then be not to analyze or criticize Fellini's work, since neither of these piecemeal activities is really faithful to man's whole evolutionary development, but to thank him for his work by thinking-out the presence of the discovery that there is nothing to discover within it; it is a receiving of a gift, a hermeneutic of his art.

Hermeneutics traditionally has been thought of as "the study of understanding, especially the task of understanding texts,"<sup>58</sup> or, more completely, as "the inquiry concerned with the presuppositions and rules of the interpretation of some form of human expression, usually a written text, although it could also be an artistic expression of some kind."<sup>59</sup> As Richard Palmer points out, hermeneutics, true to its etymology (the word is derived from Hermes, the Greek god responsible for conveying the intentions of Zeus in the form of messages to mortals), is really translation from one world to another. The etymology of "hermeneutic" is revealing. In Greek the hermeios was the Delphic priest; hermeneuein, the verb, and hermeneia, the noun, both point back to Hermes and the function of transmitting that which is beyond intelligence into a form with which man can deal. The Greek word is closely linked in development to sermo, to say, and this is certainly no accident, for to the Greeks language and writing were thought to be the gift of Hermes (Palmer, 13-14).

It was the phenomenological tradition in philosophy which attempted to revive the buried function of hermeneutics revealed by its etymology. Wilhelm Dilthey, for example, came to think of hermeneutics as being at least partly "divination," a kind of participatory understanding of human activity. He asserted that hermeneutics was essential to the development of western thought because "the quantifying, scientific

grasp of the natural world" which became predominant in the nineteenth century did not permit the play of a "personal knowledge" of "lived experience" (Palmer, pp. 130-32, 41). But it was Martin Heidegger who was most responsible for the modern sense of the function of hermeneutics. In Being and Time, for example, he elevated hermeneutics to the rank of a "regional ontology" and made it a primary tool with which to explore not just texts, but Being. He restores to it its etymological significance as a study of angelic imagination, of "the bringing of tidings," and he thinks of it as a "playful thinking" which is "more compelling" than logical thought (OWL, pp. 29-32). Thus with Heidegger hermeneutics becomes the means by which to understand the messages which Being secretly transmits and which, in a sense, the work of art receives. It is, in other words, the study of Saying, and as such it has a "fundamental announcing function" (Palmer, p. 130). But what does it announce?

In his essay "Language in the Poem" Heidegger suggests that every great poet speaks out of a place which his poetry itself illuminates (OWL, pp. 159-198). The function of the critic he suggests is to seek to find it by establishing a dialogue with the poet. The critic thus searches the work in order to make manifest an "overarching poem" which lies behind any individual work. This search is hermeneutics. It is, as Richard Palmer observes, not a matter of correctness, the primary aim of all objective points of view of works of art, especially New Criticism, but is instead a disclosure of what is hidden in the work, what is not showing; above all, it is "a receiving of a gift" (Palmer, pp. 146-7).

Heidegger knew that the search for the place of the unsaid poem is not a substitute for the poem itself; he might well have even agreed

to the "heresy of paraphrase." But he also understood that if violence were not done to the text, nothing would remain but explicitness, and the work itself would become an idol. As Dilthey rightly saw, the practice of "scientific" objectivity sacrifices in its striving for correctness lived experience (Palmer, p. 158).<sup>60</sup> All objective criticism of a work of art fails to acknowledge that its methodology is itself derivative, that the seeing of a work of art is already an interpretation, and that that seeing is, as Heidegger insists, "from the outset . . . dominated by the traditional interpretation of all beings" (PLT, p. 39; Palmer pp. 20-22).<sup>61</sup> That is, it forgets how it is with Being, failing to heed the work's Saying. Heeding instead the demands of methodology alone, it establishes between the critic and the work only and "I--it" relationship, as Martin Buber would say, not an "I--thou" interchange. Hermeneutics, as Palmer rightly insists, is, however, not at war with objective or contextualist criticism; rather by heeding and then answering the Saying of a work, it attempts to ground it.

The hermeneutic I am developing here is, as I have suggested, in part a demythologizing of hermeneutics which seeks to ground not texts, as is usually the case with such an approach, but movie narratives by locating their point of origin in the world's flesh through a genetic interpretation of their Saying, for it is a movie's tacit Saying which, by revealing its topological source, shows forth the accomplished orientation of the eye which generated it and hints at the subliminal glimpses of the more than rational distortion which are at work in its mimicry. It is a hermeneutic of what Heidegger called "answering." Answering is the appropriation of Saying in such a way that human nature and human art become the instrument for "the way" to come forth (OWL,

p. 128). By "the way" Heidegger means something like destiny, but in the present context it could perhaps best be explained as the progressive Journey Out and Back, the learning of the routes of the world's flesh. The function of criticism then is to enter the "hermeneutic circle" in order to ascertain the place from which the work can be understood, to grasp its horizon, and to follow its way (Palmer, p. 25).

One of the most basic distinctions of Heidegger's hermeneutical thought from Being and Time on is the difference between earth and world. The two exist in constant tension, a tension which it is really the function of hermeneutics to follow and to answer. The earth is to Heidegger the primordial mother (for his thought is, as William Barrett has suggested, radically feminine<sup>62</sup>), while the world is that which man constructs with his work, including works of art, out of the presence of Being (see "The Origin of a Work of Art" in PLT); it is all that he has discovered and all that he has made, and yet it is so unobtrusive, so all-encompassing, that it is never seen as such; instead we see though it (Palmer, 132-33).<sup>63</sup> Art, therefore, sides with the world, for it takes on form, but by so doing it "lets earth be earth" by showing forth its materials. Art, as Richard Palmer observes, is not

a matter of shallow agreement with something already given (i.e., the traditional view of truth as correctness); it brings the earth into the open in such a way that one can see it. (pp. 160-61)

Art is therefore a messenger, but its message is the earth.

Now the material of the movies is light, and their distinctiveness then is their ability to show forth to what extent earth is that light. (Since, as Charles Sanders Peirce correctly saw, a photograph--and by extension the movies themselves--is a "quasi-predicate" whose "quasi-subject" is the light itself, the photograph therefore serves as the

"index" of the part light plays in our relationship with the flesh and with the earth.<sup>64</sup>) The movies let earth be light by showing forth the Saying which the light transmits. It has been suggested that hermeneutics is to the text of a poem like an "oral interpretation of it" which requires an understanding of the text in order to restore to it what was lost when it was printed (Palmer, p. 18). A hermeneutics of film, I can now suggest, discovers the unglossed light of the earth which lies within the movie, restoring its unglossed Saying of the way, of man's evolving mimicry of the earth. (See Appendices I and V.)

In the hermeneutic of Fellini's films which follows I will seek to answer their narration of the ways of the earth, following the evolving orientation within the flesh which they make present by heeding those promptings of the more than rational distortion, embodied in the works' Saying, which were the originary source of that orientation, in order to ascertain if Fellini's imaginative journey achieves that accommodation to the earth which I have called the Open and Lina Wertmuller describes as the discovery that there is nothing to discover. My thinking-out of Fellini's work will rely heavily on the thinking of others, especially those who have intensified my own perception, in particular, Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, and Rainer Maria Rilke. The discovery that there is nothing to discover seems to come as a "shock of recognition," and all these men have felt the shock together despite the vast differences in their individual imaginations; for as Melville saw, "Genius the world round stands hand in hand." I will use my sources, therefore, in order to construct a theoretical (literally, since the etymology of the word is in the verb "to see") groundwork on which my thinking will be based, for purposes of comparison and illumination in my attempt to

understand the nature of creativity, and as genuine inspirations for my own vision of Fellini's films.

J. Dudley Andrews recently observed that a film theory must be applicable to more than just the movies that generate it, otherwise the critic would be only a "connoisseur."<sup>65</sup> His point is, I believe, well taken, but even though I am "wildly partisan" in the pages to follow on Fellini's behalf (as Baudelaire insisted every critic must be in order to keep pace with genius), I do not think I can be accused of narrowness. The search for the Open as I will outline it here is certainly not the sole province of Federico Fellini, but a major paradigm of twentieth century art and of the movies in particular. But Andrews presents one other guiding principle about film theory with which I cannot agree. A theory, he insists, should never be "like its subject." For is botany like a flower?<sup>66</sup> This false analogy, if accepted, would, I believe, give a work of art over to that which it attempts to escape from: the confines and glosses of abstract rationality. The hermeneutic I will seek to develop here will attempt to answer Fellini's art with imagination comparable to his own. Only in that way can I learn from it.

The following work is divided into five chapters. Chapter Two, The Ways of the Flesh, is concerned with all of Fellini's movies, however briefly, and seeks to establish the presence and imaginative function of certain preoccupations or "eternal recurrences" in Fellini's art, the key themes, images, gestures, or ways in the movies upon which the discovery that there is nothing to discover plays: failure, the elements, the grotesque, madmen and clowns, children, inside/outside, and the face-to-face.

Chapter Three, Juliet of the Spirits: From Love to Autochthony, studies in depth an Outside Narrative, a product of the "then there is no mountain" stage, but which is itself a complete Journey Out and Back.

Chapter Four, Amarcord: A "Celebration of the Light," has as its subject an Open Narrative, a product of the "then there is a mountain" stage.

Chapter Five, The Open, is primarily an attempt to recapitulate and re-think this term in light of the work as a whole and to discover the full meaning of the discovery that there is nothing to discover as revealed in Fellini's work.

Five Appendices complete the study, all of them theoretical and all intended to provide depth and to add clarity to the preceding discussion by elaborating on the meaning of several of the key ideas of this work: the nature of creativity, the more than rational distortion, Saying, the flesh, and the movies as mimicry.

<sup>1</sup>John Huddy, "Lina Wertmuller," Miami Herald, 15 Aug. 1976, p. H-1.

<sup>2</sup>David Thomson, A Biographical Dictionary of Film (New York: Morrow, 1975), pp. 167-68.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Angelo Solmi, Fellini (London: Merlin Press, 1967), p. 24, and in "Interview," Playboy, Feb. 1966, p. 58, respectively. All future references to these works will be cited in the text.

<sup>4</sup>Quoted respectively in Edward Murray, Fellini the Artist (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1976), p. xi, and in Fellini on Fellini, ed. Christian Strich (New York: Delacourte Press, 1976), p. 100 (hereafter referred to as Strich). All future references to these works will be cited in the text.

<sup>5</sup>Gilbert Salachas, Federico Fellini (New York: Crown, 1969), p. 109. All future references to this work will be cited in the text.

<sup>6</sup>Charles Samuels, Encountering Directors (New York: Putnam's, 1972), p. 133; my italics. All future references to this work will be cited in the text.



<sup>7</sup> Pierre Kast, "Federico Fellini," Interviews with Film Directors, ed. Andrew Sarris (New York: Avon, 1969), pp. 182-83. All future references to this work will be cited in the text.

<sup>8</sup> Eugene Walter, "Federico Fellini: Wizard of Film," Atlantic, 216 (Dec. 1965), p. 67.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Suzanne Budgeon, Fellini (London: British Film Institute, 1966), p. 91. All future references to this work will be cited in the text.

<sup>10</sup> "Literature and Religion," Relations of Literary Study, ed. James Thorpe (New York: MLA, 1967), p. 126.

<sup>11</sup> Rainer Maria Rilke also thought of imagination as a tracing of "lines"; the artist, he explained, is like "a dancer whose movements are broken by the constraint of his cell. That which finds no expression in his steps and limited swing of his arms, comes in exhaustion from his lips, or else he has to scratch the unlived lines of his body into the walls with his wounded fingers." Quoted in Norman O. Brown, Life Against Death (New York: Vintage, 1959), p. 65; my italics. The bread crumbs which Garry Trudeau refers to in the epigraph are, phenomenologically, probably another name for these lines.

<sup>12</sup> John Simon, Ingmar Bergman Directs (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich, 1972), pp. 221-22.

<sup>13</sup> Doris Hamblin, "Which Face is Fellini?" Life, 71 (30 July 1971), p. 60.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Jose de Vilallonga, "Fellini on Fellini," Vogue, 25 Aug. 1972, p. 95. All future references to this work will be cited in the text.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Eileen Hughes, On the Set of Fellini-Satyricon (New York: Morrow, 1971), p. 157.

<sup>16</sup> Opus Posthumous (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957). All future references to this work will be referred to as OP and cited in the text. This theme is pursued throughout Stevens' Necessary Angel as well (New York: Vintage Books, 1951), see in particular pp. 24, 31, 33, 59, 60-61, 130, 139, 154. All future references to this work will be referred to as NA and cited in the text.

<sup>17</sup> Collected Poems (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954), pp. 334-35; my italics. All future references to this work will be referred to as CP and cited in the text.

<sup>18</sup> Martin Heidegger, The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), pp. 16-18, 25-28, 115-154. All future references to this work will be referred to as QT and cited in the text. A more complete explanation of Heidegger's thinking can be found in Appendix III.

19, "Introduction," The Question Concerning Technology, p. xxix.

20. The French film critic, Amedee Ayfre observed once that the movies' greatness stems from their symbiotic nature, for "film, far from being a cold record of the world, is a record of . . . a symbiotic rapport between intention and resistance, between author and material, matter and mind." Quoted in J. Dudley Andrews, The Major Film Theories (New York: Oxford, 1976), p. 249.

21. For two good working accounts of Fellini during the entire course of filming a movie see Deena Boyer, The Two Hundred Days of 8 1/2 (New York: Macmillan, 1964) and Eileen Hughes, On the Set of Fellini-Satyricon. Fellini has given a vivid description of his own style in the account of the first time he felt fully the heat of his imagination:

It's a true story, but every time I tell it people look at me as if I'm telling some invented anecdote. However, it did happen just like this. One morning I found myself on a small boat, which having left the pier at Fiumicino, was on its way to meet a motor fishing boat on the high seas that was carrying the cast and crew of The White Sheik. They were waiting for me to start shooting; they were waiting for the director. I had said goodbye to Giulietta, almost at dawn, with the same beating of the heart and fear that the schoolboy has when he goes to take exams. I even went to church, attempting a prayer. I took my car, and on the road to Ostia one of my tires blew out. The troupe, as I told you, had already embarked. And down there, in the middle of the sea, I saw my destiny. I was to shoot a very complicated scene between Sordi and Brunella Bovo. As I approached the fishing boat, I saw the faces of the workmen, the lights already on. I kept repeating to myself: "What will I do now?" I didn't recall the film anymore, I didn't remember anything. All I wanted to do was escape. In the few moments between the pier and the fishing boat, I had become a demanding, detail-conscious director with all the defects and all the good qualities that I had always envied in real directors. (Tullio Kezich, "The Long Interview," in Juliet of the Spirits (New York: Ballantine Books, 1966), p. 20; all future references to this work will be cited in the text)

22. Harvey Cox, "The Purpose of the Grotesque in Fellini's Films," Celluloid and Symbols, ed. John C. Cooper and Carl Skrade (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), pp. 97-98.

23. Stanley Burnshaw, The Seamless Web (New York: George Braziller, 1970), pp. 97-98.

24. The poem can be found in Williams' Collected Earlier Poems (New York: New Directions, 1951), pp. 1-13. See J. Hillis Miller's discussion of it in The Poets of Reality (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), pp. 291-92, 341.

<sup>25</sup> Picasso once commented on Chagall that "When he paints you can't tell whether he's asleep or awake. He must have an angel in his head somewhere." Quoted in Alfred Werner, ed., Chagall: Watercolors and Gouaches (New York: Watson Guptill, 1970), p. 12.

<sup>26</sup> Rilke has defined his Angel in this way:  
The "Angel of the Elegies has nothing to do with the Angel of the Christian heaven (rather with the angelic figures of Islam) . . . The Angel of the Elegies is the creature in whom that transformation of the visible into the invisible we are performing already appears complete . . . The Angel of the Elegies is the being who vouches for the recognition of a higher degree of reality in the invisible--therefore "terrible" to us, because we, its lovers and transformers, still depend on the visible. (Letters of Rainer Maria Rilke: 1910-1926 (New York: W. W. Norton, 1948), pp. 375-76)

<sup>27</sup> Existence and Being (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1949), pp. 153-54. All future references to this work will be referred to as EB and cited in the text.

<sup>28</sup> The Tradition of the New (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960), pp. 121-26.

<sup>29</sup> The Christian mystic Jacob Boehme once speculated about a time when pure "sensual speech" reigned; could this not be a description of Saying's origin?

No people understand any more the sensual language, and the birds in the air and the beasts in the forest do understand it according to their species. Therefore man may reflect on what he has been robbed of and what he is to recover in the second birth. For in the sensual language all spirits speak with each other, they need no other language, for it is the language of nature. (Quoted in Norman O. Brown, p. 72)

<sup>30</sup> On the Way to Language, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 123. All future references to this work will be referred to as OWL and cited in the text.

<sup>31</sup> Poetry, Language, Thought, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), pp. 53, 140. All future references to this work will be referred to as PLT and cited in the text.

<sup>32</sup> Irrational Man (Garden City: Doubleday, 1958), pp. 214-15.

<sup>33</sup> Sound and Symbol: Music and the External World (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), pp. 275-78, 348.

<sup>34</sup> Alphonso Lingis, "Translator's Preface," The Visible and the Invisible, ed. Claude Lefort (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. liii.

35 J. Hillis Miller meant much the same thing when he identifies the source of poetry in his essay on William Carlos Williams in Poets of Reality (pp. 321-22):

Instead of seeing an object as an example of an abstract category the poet must see it only as if it had just been created, and then the depths of his being opens up to receive, in a flood of emotion, the being of the thing he sees. Vivid sensation is a "prize" which pierces to the heart of the poet's being, and "wakes" him to another level of existence, a level closer to the heart of creation. . . . To see things in terms of their existence is to see them at such a depth that it can be recognized that their creation is something which goes on constantly.

36 Pilgrim at Tinker Creek (New York: Bantam, 1974), pp. 135-36.

37 Selected Letters of Dylan Thomas, ed. Constantine Fitzgibbon (New York: New Directions, 1967), p. 87; my italics.

38 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, The Visible and the Invisible, p. 143. All future references to this work will be referred to as VI and cited in the text.

39 "The first time we see light," Condillac wrote, "we are it rather than see it"; quoted in Zuckerkindl, p. 342.

40 Levi-Strauss' designation of "the Raw" likewise names the same aspect of perception; see Octavio Paz, Claude Levi-Strauss (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), p. 47; as do Martin Buber's "world order," the opposite of the "ordered world"--Buber's equivalent of Levi-Strauss' "the Cooked"; see I and Thou (New York: Scribner's, 1958), pp. 31-33; and Martin Heidegger's use of the term physis; see Introduction to Metaphysics (Garden City: Doubleday, 1959). All future references to this last work will be referred to as IM and cited in the text.

41 By "wild being" Merleau-Ponty seems to refer to the sensible previous to any human cultivation or orientation; "wild being" becomes part of the flesh through the intervention of the "wild logos" (see below). For Stevens' "vulgate," see Appendix II.

42 Lingis, pp. lv-lvi.

43 For Merleau-Ponty, this process is not automatic. "Perception," he explains, "is not first perception of things, but perception of elements, . . . of rays of the world, things which are dimensions, which are worlds . . ." (VI, p. 218). The image must be plucked out of its "constellation," for it is, in reality, part of a "texture" which is "the woof of the simultaneous and the successive" which generates it (p. 132).

44 Merleau-Ponty thought that in a creative mind the new routes of the flesh in his experience would begin to press upon the given structure of language to such an extent that language's enclosure of the world

would be forced open to contain it. This is the thesis, in part, of The Prose of the World, ed. Claude Lefort (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973). Might not the same be said for a visual artist like Fellini, that he expands, pushes open, the formerly real?

<sup>45</sup>See "Cabiria: The Voyage to the End of Neorealism," in What is Cinema, Vol. II, ed. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California, 1971), pp. 832-92. All future references to Bazin will be referred to by volume number and cited in the text.

<sup>46</sup>Irving R. Levine, "'I Was Born for the Cinema': an Interview with Federico Fellini," Film Comment, Vol. IV, No. 1 (1966), 84. All future references to this work will be cited in the text.

<sup>47</sup>I borrow the expression from Robert Pirsig, Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance (New York: Morrow, 1974), pp. 181 ff.

<sup>48</sup>Quoted in "What Are Poets For?" by Martin Heidegger in Poetry, Language, Thought, p. 108. This essay is an examination of Rilke's idea of the Open.

<sup>49</sup>In M. D. Herter Norton's translation the poem reads:

Flower-muscle, that opens the anemone's  
meadow-morning bit by bit,  
until into her lap the polyphonic  
light of the loud skies pours down,

muscle of infinite reception  
tensed in the still star of the blossom,  
sometimes so overmanned with abundance  
that the sunset's beckoning to rest

is scarcely able to give back to you  
the wide-sprung petal-edges:  
you, resolve and strength of how many worlds!

We, with our violence, are longer-lasting.  
But when in which one of all lives,  
are we at last open and receivers.

(New York: W. W. Norton, 1942), p. 79. All future references to this work will be referred to as SO and cited in the text. Quoted by permission of the publisher.

<sup>50</sup>Duino Elegies, translated by J. B. Leishman and Stephen Spender (New York: W. W. Norton, 1939), p. 67; my italics. All future references to this work will be referred to as DE and cited in the text.

<sup>51</sup>The End of Philosophy, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 102. All future references to this work will be referred to as EP and cited in the text.

<sup>52</sup>See Francis Marion Burke, "Fellini's La Dolce Vita: Marcello's Odyssey to Annulment," Dissertation, University of Florida, 1974, for an excellent discussion of this theme.

<sup>53</sup>Juliet of the Spirits, ed. Tullio Kezich, p. 215.

<sup>54</sup>Quoted in Dario Zanelli, ed., Fellini's Satyricon (New York: Ballantine, 1970), p. 46, my italics. All future references to this work will be cited in the text.

<sup>55</sup>William Carlos Williams, Paterson (New York: New Directions, 1963), p. 3.

<sup>56</sup>For one retelling of the Zen parable, among many, see William Irwin Thompson, Passages About Earth (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), pp. 97-103. Thompson has accounted for the evolution depicted in this parable in a yantra which can be seen on the inside front cover of this work. In his Politics of Experience (New York: Ballantine Books, 1967), pp. 100-145, the Scottish psychiatrist R. D. Laing describes a similar passage which he has observed in the insane, a going crazy, or "leaving the formation," in order to become sane again. He refers to this process as the "Journey Out and Back," and I will sometimes use Laing's name to designate the evolution described in this Zen parable.

<sup>57</sup>"Conversation on a Country Path About Thinking," Discourse on Thinking (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 68. All future references to this work will be referred to as "CCP" and cited in the text.

<sup>58</sup>Richard E. Palmer, Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), p. 8. All future references to this work will be cited in the text.

<sup>59</sup>Van Harvey, A Handbook of Theological Terms (New York: Macmillan, 1964), p. 117.

<sup>60</sup>Compare Palmer's assertion in the following: "'Science manipulates things and gives up living in them,' the late French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty tells us. This, in one sentence, is what has happened to American literary interpretation" (Palmer, p. 7).

<sup>61</sup>Criticism is dominated by what Owen Barfield likes to call RUP (residue of unresolved positivism). Although its practitioners know better, they still behave in relation to the work before them as if the subject/object dichotomy still holds sway, even though philosophically they are opposed to such polarization. See Evolution of Consciousness: Studies in Polarity, ed. Shirley Sugerman (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1976), pp. 13-14.

<sup>62</sup>Irrational Man, pp. 248-49; Barrett observes how Sartre is genuinely afraid of "being in itself"; see for example Roquentin's reaction of "nausea" to it in the novel of the same name.

<sup>63</sup>See "The Worldhood of the World" section in Being and Time, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), pp. 91-145. All future references to this work will be referred to as BT and cited in the text.

<sup>64</sup> See Peter Wollen's discussion of Peirce's theory of signs in Signs and Meaning in the Cinema (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), pp. 122-24.

<sup>65</sup> Andrews, p. 5.

<sup>66</sup> Andrews, p. 241.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE WAYS OF THE FLESH

Visible and mobile, my body is a thing among things; it is caught in the fabric of the world, and its cohesion is that of a thing. But because it moves itself and sees, it holds things in a circle around itself. Things are an annex or prolongation of itself; they are incrustated into its flesh, they are part of its full definition; the world is made of the same stuff as the body. This way of turning things around, these antinomies, are different ways of saying that vision happens among, or is caught in, things--in that place where something visible undertakes to see, becomes visible for itself by virtue of the sight of things; in that place where there persists, like the mother water in crystal, the undividedness of the sensing and the sensed.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind"

The poems composed by every great poet are attempts to put into words one single poem. His greatness depends on the extent to which he has entrusted himself to this unique poem, for it is this which enables him to maintain the purity of his poetic utterances by keeping them within the ambit of their single origin. This unique poem in a poet remain unuttered. None of the individual poems, nor all of them together, say everything. And yet each poem speaks out of this unique uncomposed poem and each time says what is the same.

Martin Heidegger

In La Strada, the fool, Il Matto, tries to comfort Gelsomina about her difficulties with Zampano. When the fool first appears in the film he wears angel wings and not only crosses a dangerous high-wire above a city square, but manages to perform the incredible yet ordinary task of eating a plate of spaghetti at the same time. To Gelsomina he continues to fulfill a hermetic function, attempting as he does to explain life's



meaning to her, and his message appropriately enough concerns the mundane. "There's nothing useless in this world," he informs her. "You see this pebble? Everything has a use, even this pebble." When Gelsomina inquires, "What use?" Il Matto replies

How do I know? If I knew, d'you know who I'd be? I don't know what this stone does, but it's useful. If it isn't useful then even the stars aren't useful. (Solmi, p. 112)

Il Matto's faith is the faith of a story teller, for later we learn that Zampano, who in his animal solipsism is blind to such wisdom as the fool's, detests him because "he is always making up stories about me." It is, however, Fellini's faith as well, for his movies are narrative tryings-out, part of an imaginative journey set against the road markers of the always present commonplaces of earth, seeking to understand their use.

That Fellini's films share certain always repeated commonplaces, even the least acute Fellini critics have noted. His "style" and his "themes" are now so familiar to most cineastes that "Felliniesque" is about to enter the dictionary as an adjective describing a preoccupation with, among other things, enormous earth mothers, all types of grotesques, dwarves, hunchbacks, cripples, hermaphrodites, nymphomaniacs, madmen, clowns, and scatology of all kinds. In Leslie Fiedler's recent book Freaks, for example, the references to Fellini are more numerous than to any other artist except Rabelais, and in all of them, "Fellini" is considered to be nearly synonymous with aberration and deformity.<sup>1</sup> At least since Juliet of the Spirits it has been critically fashionable to dismiss these recurrences as obsessions, as the director's "doing a Fellini," and as proof of his artistic degeneration and, to some at least, even of his madness. The minds of film critics and reviewers, like the minds of moviegoers, are predisposed against

repetition; the culture itself requires, after all, constant change and continual newness, especially from its art, and so it is little wonder that Fellini's preoccupations seem to many a banal treading-of-water.<sup>2</sup>

But it is not merely the film-goer and reviewer who require constant newness. Even such a poet as Wallace Stevens tends to think of repetition as anti-life and anti-imagination. In a section of "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction" appropriately entitled "It Must Change," he finds the essentially repetitive singing of sparrows, jays, and wrens to be an "idiot minstrelsy," a "granite monotony" which would all but extinguish man's fiction-making capabilities if he did not flee its influence, and although he makes peace with repetition by the end of the poem, he never surrenders the idea that repetition is essentially "gibberish."

Fellini, however, has from the very beginning of his career seemed to almost relish repetition. When his own voice describes at the end of Roma how the revelers at the Fiesta de Noantri eat and drink "not much different from the beginning of this picture, or a hundred years ago, or forever and forever," he seems to find consolation in the fact. All of the ever recurrent subjects of his films, all of those which are traditionally thought of as Felliniesque and those not as commonly noticed by the critics, failure, the elements, children, the face-to-face, all return again and again as if, like Il Matto with the pebble, Fellini is trying to understand them, to heed their Saying and abide by it. Has he not insisted, after all, that he has always been making the same movie?

In The Gay Science, Friedrich Nietzsche described for the first time a phenomenon which he called "eternal recurrence." In order to

explain what he meant by the phrase, he asks us to imagine:

How, if some day or night, a demon were to sneak after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: "This life, as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and every sigh . . . must return to you--all in the same succession and sequence--even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned over and over--and you with it, a mere grain of dust." Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: "You are a god, and never did I hear anything more godlike!" If this thought were to gain possession of you, it would change you as you are, or perhaps crush you. The question in each and everything, "do you want this once more and innumerable times more?" would weigh upon your actions as the greatest stress. Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life to crave nothing more<sup>3</sup> fervently than this ultimate eternal confirmation . . . ?

The "eternal recurrences" of Fellini's films, which I will hereafter call ways of the flesh, seem to serve as just such an "ultimate eternal confirmation" of life on earth. As Nietzsche well knew, that which brings the news that there is nothing new need not be thought a demon; for he who accepts "eternal recurrence" and comes to feel no need as a result, trusting tacitly in his autochthony, the demon becomes an angel. The ways of the flesh are angelic presences in Fellini's imagination, not symbols or representations but rather, as he himself has explained (in attempting to describe the function of his actors and characters), "the incarnations, the real body of something within my imagination" (Levine, p. 82; my italics), the imagination of a major man.

I have called these "eternal recurrences" ways of the flesh because they are, first of all, primary routes of the visible to be learned within what Merleau-Ponty called the flesh, that realm of interaction between the seer and the seen. As presences, they must be learned,

that is, the relationship of the seer to them must become instantaneous; their distance and difference need to be brought near in order for their being to be felt. They are not objects, thrown in the way, but rather means of orientation, ways. But they are as well the way itself, the path of man's evolution and of the development of an individual imagination. The Journey Out and Back is a figure set over and against the ground which their presences establish. They might as easily be called the "gestures" of the flesh, since "gesture" literally means "to bear, or carry," and these gestures of the flesh bear toward man the way of the earth, abducting him into a relationship to it, achieved through mimicry of it, which I have called the Open. They carry forward what Gerard Manley Hopkins thought of as "instress," the "inner energy of being which upholds things" in their patterns, textures, colors, etc.<sup>4</sup> They are gestures in the Oriental sense as well, each a "gathering of a bearing" set always against a background of emptiness (OWL, pp. 17-19). As in Japanese No-drama, where the gestures of the actors are judged excellent according to how well they summon the image of the surrounding vastness, the gestures or ways of the flesh, although they ground man's journey, allude as figures to a more encompassing ground, the light in which, in movie narratives at least, they find a home.<sup>5</sup>

No semiotics of film can do justice to these ways of Fellini's imagination, for they are the very opposite of a code as Christian Metz understands it. They are not a logical, non-physical mechanism by which Fellini imposes significance on his imagery.<sup>6</sup> Their function is instead rather like the Zen Buddhist koan: to stop human judgment and rational manipulation by directly pointing to the "inscape" (as Hopkins would say) of the obvious reality which lies right before the

eyes. In the education of a Zen Buddhist monk, the student returns again and again to his master with possible solutions to the problem presented in the koan until he attains understanding. Similarly, Fellini returns again and again to the ways of the flesh in each cinematic experiment at getting it right, offering possible narrative solutions to the perplexing presences of each. As a result, his Juliet can be viewed as a homologue of his Cabiria, since they spring from the same source, and the wind at the end of Amarcord is as well the homologue of the wind in the first image of The White Sheik. Each presence asks only to be heeded for its own sake, in its own being. Fellini's preoccupation with the ways of the flesh, his imagination's struggle with the koan-like puzzle which they present, is as well then a "topology of Being," as Heidegger describes it, a seeking out of the whereabouts of Being's actual presence, which is hermeneutics' purpose to follow (PLT, p. 12).

The attainment of such a solution requires attention to the Saying of each of these ways. But in order for this to take place, as Heidegger suggests, it is necessary

For something . . . to come about by which the vast distance in which the nature of Saying assumes its radiance, opened itself to the messenger's course and shone upon it. . . . A stilling would have to come about that quiets the breath of the vastness into the structure of Saying which calls out to the messenger. (OWL, p. 53)

Fellini's preoccupation with the ways of the flesh should be seen as a search for that stillness, a search for the Open. That such stillness is unattainable is the thesis of the auteur theorist, for to them "noise" is always clogging the channels, but auteur criticism is a standard capitulation to an aesthetics of failure which has found a prominent voice in the twentieth century and to which Fellini has never subscribed.

Georges Poulet, Emmanuel Levinas, Maurice Blanchot, Samuel Beckett, all have proclaimed that art is systematic failure, a fundamental defeat in which man remains always one step removed from reality, always unable to capture his own shadow or establish any face-to-face exchange with his world.<sup>7</sup> Beckett, a Nobel-prize winner, has, for example, announced his dedication to the aesthetics of failure most radically when he extolled in an interview the value of art "weary of pretending to be able, of being able, of doing a little better the same old thing, of going a little further along a dreary road." His commitment, he insists, is instead to

The expression that there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express.

Every great artist, Beckett claims, realizes that "to be an artist is to fail, as no other dare fail, that failure is his world."<sup>8</sup> All of these thinkers, to whom the oblivion of Being has become a paramount reality, judge its sway to be permanent.

In 8 1/2 this problem of failure announces itself in the second scene as one of the ways of the flesh. During Guido's medical examination, Carini, a writer, asks him "Are you preparing another film? Another film that offers no hope?" Later, Conocchia, Guido's assistant director, upset over Guido's neglect of him, lashes out against him with the charge "You're not the man you used to be." And at the news conference the producer Pace concludes vehemently that Guido in fact "has nothing to say." These incidents mark 8 1/2 as perhaps the pivotal film in Fellini's *Journey Out and Back*; in it his imagination has reached its nadir.

If 8 1/2 fails, the *Journey Out and Back* will end in the oblivion of Being. None of the films which preceded it were able to generate

within their own narratives a completely affirmative birth. The White Sheik (1952) ends in a compromise and conciliation with the powers that be, its last image a fixed shot of a lifeless statue in the square outside St. Peter's. I Vitelloni (1953) succeeds at least in starting Moraldo on his prodigal journey, the train he rides on his way to Rome rushing clandestinely by the rest of the "young veals" as they sleep. La Strada's (1954) climax finds Zampano lying face down in the sand of a beach by the sea, realizing for the first time his inhumanity and lamenting the death of Gelsomina. In the finale of Il Bidone (1955), Augusto too lies in agony and defeat in the dirt and dies there. So when at the end of Nights of Cabiria (1956), Cabiria falls to the ground after being robbed of her life savings by Oscar and screams, "I don't want to live," it comes as no surprise to followers of Fellini's development. Fellini's eternally recurrent imagination has brought her to the very same place as Zampano and Augusto. The aesthetics of failure seem to have triumphed.

But then a miracle happens. A cut follows, and Cabiria walks away from the scene of her tragedy back toward life. This tiny figure who earlier proclaimed to the magician in The Lux that "I have everything I need," who prayed to the Madonna (and secretly to herself, since her middle name is Mary), "Mother Maria! Change my life," wanders back onto the road, the eternally recurrent "la strada" of Fellini's imagination, the human way, and mixing with a band of angelic revelers, is summoned back by what Fellini has described as a "serenade" in lieu of an explanation for what had happened which would be unattainable (Salachas, pp. 100-102), translating the smiling "Buena sera" which she receives from one of the group into the hinting, epiphanal, shy half-smile of resignation and the face-to-face glance of recognition she

confers upon the viewer in the full-frame image of her face which ends the movie.

But this first essential step of resignation to the ways of the earth, to the concrete, even though it takes Fellini to the "other side of neo-realism," does not bring him to the end of his way. With La Dolce Vita (1959) the ways of the flesh present themselves again as problems and the film's center, Marcello Rubini, achieves no marriage with his world. The film is, rather, as Frank Burke has shown, an "annulment," ending in Marcello's inability to heed the beneficent smile of the angel Paola, separated as they are by the very elements themselves. He moves on along his way while Paola comes face-to-face with the camera alone, the Saying of her image as yet unable to be integrated by the "iris frettings" of either Marcello's or Fellini's forward thrusting imaginations.

The question which Carini poses to Guido then is in fact a question Fellini proposes to himself: will he accept the Beckettian aesthetic of failure or seek to imagine what might lie on the other side of such defeat? That Guido understands the nature of his impasse is apparent throughout 8 1/2. Carini, Conocchia, Pace, Daumier, his wife Luisa, and Claudia, all present to him incriminating evidence of his failures as a man and artist. Daumier, for example, compares his work unfavorably with the avant-garde and laments its "ambiguous realism." He protests too against its autobiographical quality, asking "How could the story of your own life interest anyone?" Luisa berates him with the question, "What can you teach others when you are not even honest with your own wife?" and her apparition at the press conference beseeches him with the question "Will you ever truly marry me?" And Claudia, during their meeting on the Piazza after the screening, tells him that he



dresses like an old man and accuses him of being unable to film a love story. Guido is, after all, about to direct a movie about the escape of earth's last survivors to another planet in a rocket ship (which would in fact only be a reenactment of his imagined floating-away at the very beginning of the film). It is a subject perfectly suited to his sense of unfulfillment. At the spaceship tower he openly confesses to to Rossella his impotence, proclaiming in fact that "I have nothing to say and I intend to say it." And when in his fantasies Guido tries to escape his accusers by shooting himself, he seems to have surrendered to Daumier's Cartesian desire to escape "all words, images, sounds--none of which has any right to exist" and to seek instead "the only real perfection . . . nothingness."

But Guido insists as well throughout 8 1/2 that his real desire is not to practice universal doubt and accept failure, but rather to make a film in which he is able to "put everything in." And as he listens to Daumier's monologue, it occurs to him that his wish can be realized, that he need not continue to "film a lie." When the magician Maurice appears to announce to Guido that "We're ready to begin," his words refer to much more than the joyous parade about the circus ring which follows. They mark the end of failure in Fellini's films and the beginning of the opening of the Open, for Guido's desire to "put everything in" is really the wish to include all the tacit data, the Saying of the unglossed vision, which fill his "eye-pouch" and constitute the real body of his imagination.<sup>9</sup> And as a result, in the films which follow 8 1/2, the ways of the flesh, the elements, the grotesque, madmen and clowns, children, inside/outside, and the face-to-face, have their full say.<sup>10</sup> In 8 1/2, as Fellini himself has commented, he made "an agreement with life" (Murray, p. 134).

## The Elements

In Fellini-Satyricon, after Trimalchio's banquet, Encolpio and Eumolpus the poet are seen stretched out on a broad, flat, plowed field beneath a night sky. Eumolpus, having escaped Trimalchio's ovens and anticipating his own death, discourses to Encolpio. "The poets are dying, poetry remains," he explains. And since at the movie's end he does in fact die, requiring that all who would share in his new-found wealth must eat his body, his observation seems accurate enough. But what is the nature of the poetry which remains after the poet himself has achieved consummation?

At the movie's close Encolpio does not partake of the poet's body, for he is bound for the sea, boarding the ship with a young Greek, an African, and others in search of undiscovered lands. He has no need to share in Eumolpus' legacy, for in the earlier scene between them, Eumolpus, then a man with no wealth, conferred on Encolpio a more elemental bequest:

I leave you life itself. I leave you the seasons, especially spring and summer. I leave you the wind and the sun. I leave you the sea. The sea is good, and the earth, too, is good. I leave you the color of ripe grain; and the torrents and streams; the great clouds which fly solemnly and light . . . I leave you the trees and their busy inhabitants. Love, tears, happiness. The stars, Encolpius, I leave you those too. I leave you sounds, songs, noises; the voice of man, which is the most harmonious of music. . . .<sup>11</sup>

Eumolpus' gift, presumably the elemental constituents of the poetry which would remain even if all poets were dead, is bestowed on a young man who is fleeing from those very things which the poet leaves to him. In the soliloquy with which the movie opens, Encolpio asserts defiantly that

The earth has not succeeded in dragging me down into the abyss and swallowing me! Nor has the sea swallowed me up, ready as she is to take the innocent for herself! (Zanelli, p. 93)

A prodigal, one who finds himself "banished from my country, abandoned," Encolpio at first seeks elemental union only with Giton, who is in his eyes "the sun, the sea, the gods," but at the movie's close, after his confession of treachery and waywardness before Oenothea and his intercourse with the earth mother, he returns to his prodigality in league with, and not in rebellion against, the elements.<sup>12</sup> Healed, made potent again by Oenothea's fire, he embarks with the young across the sea: "The wind is right, the clouds are breaking," his voice explains.

Water, air, fire, and earth, and the seasons in which they manifest themselves, constitute the most elemental phenomenal ways of the flesh which man's mimicry seeks to accommodate;<sup>13</sup> for it is only within the climate which they present, the region of what Heidegger (and the American Indian) liked to call the "fourfold" (PLT, pp. 149-50), that man can abide in anything other than waywardness. As presences in Fellini's films, they are predominant and the wisdom to be gained from heeding their marking out of the way is literally proverbial.

Wallace Stevens thought of the discovery of the real as an experience of "major weather," which would be, as he puts it in "The Snow Man," merely a discovery of "nothing that is not there and the nothing that is" (CP, p. 9). For to see our stay within the fourfold for what it is, not ideally or symbolically, would be:

To discover an order as of  
A season, to discover summer and know it,

To discover winter and know it well, to find,  
Not to impose, not to have reasoned at all,  
Out of nothing to have come on major weather.

It is possible, possible, it must  
Be possible. It must be that in time  
The real will from its crude compoundings come,

Seeming at first, a beast disgorged, unlike,  
Warmed by desperate milk. (CP, 403-404; my italics)

Following the weathering/Saying of the elemental, Fellini's films seek to disgorge the real, a feat performed most fully, as I will show in Chapter Four, in Amarcord's saga of the seasons.

Fellini claims that his preoccupation with water and the sea stems simply from his sense as an Italian of being surrounded by it. But it is fascinating to him as well, he explains, because it is "an element I have never conquered: the place from which come our monsters and ghosts" (Strich, pp. 14-16).<sup>14</sup> Monsters and ghosts do arise from it, it is true, the shapeless fish at the end of La Dolce Vita, the massive whale pulled on board Lichas' ship in Fellini-Satyricon, and the barge full of invaders in Juliet of the Spirits. But the presence of water plays several other roles as well in Fellini's imagination.

Fellini's "sense of an ending" seems to require the sea as a backdrop. La Strada, La Dolce Vita, 8 1/2, Juliet of the Spirits, Fellini-Satyricon, Amarcord, all end with the sea present in some way. Il Bidone, Clowns, and Roma are, in fact, the only major Fellini films in which water does not figure prominently. Water even appears in unusual places and often unexpectedly, infiltrating the prostitute's bedroom in La Dolce Vita, overflowing the bathtub and flooding the hotel in The White Sheik, casting an aura of opaque mystery over the attempt of Fellini and his crew to "document" the Raccordo Annulare in Roma (the people in the cars become almost phantom presences; the crumbling architecture appears haunted; and the shimmering headlights seem the product of an almost hallucinogenic vision). In La Dolce Vita, a hard rain creates a similar effect, falling on the scene of the "miracle" and destroying the flood lights.

In the impenetrableness of water, the earth's refusal seems to become manifest. For Fellini, as for Melville, "water and meditation

are forever wedded." By serving as a mirror in which is revealed the futility of man's pursuit of the oblivion of Being, water brings to him a revelation of the extent of his own waywardness. For those who have never strayed into that oblivion, like Gelsomina in La Strada, it is almost a home, a primal source, to which she feels attuned in her deepest recesses. But for Zampano, it is the scene of his remorse and despair. And when Marcello enters the waters of the Trevi Fountain in pursuit of Sylvia, he finds himself mysteriously confessing to his own waywardness:

Yes, yes, she's perfectly right. I've been wrong about everything. We've all been wrong about everything.<sup>15</sup>

Air manifests itself in Fellini's films principally in the eternally recurrent present of the wind. There is no more instantly identifiable sign, although nearly invisible, of the presence of Fellini's imagination at work. In the still first shot of The White Sheik, the wind is alone moving and active, and twenty one years later it is still blowing in both the opening and closing images of Amarcord. It blows along the beach where the vitelloni wander. Gelsomina listens to it attentively, as if for a message. Its noise, coupled with the roar of the sea, makes it impossible for Marcello to understand Paola's summons at the end of La Dolce Vita. It fills and lifts the white cloth on Saraghina's chair, turning it into an object of wonder for young Guido in 8 1/2. It provides the natural propulsion for Encolpio's "journey out" at the end of Fellini-Satyricon. It howls around the road markers at the beginning of Roma and through the construction site of the Metro-Roma. And in Amarcord it blows into the Borgo the "little hands" of spring.

The wind is a force of change within the oblivion of Being, a push along the way, the energy behind the breaking down of the old way

and the old gloss or description and the presentiment of the impending creation of another step in man's evolving mimicry. When the wind blows in Fellini's films, something is up. Like the wind which blows "The Curtains of the House of the Metaphysician" in Stevens' poem, its "long motions" are really "the ponderous/deflations of distance," part of the baring of "The last largeness, bold to see" (CP, p. 62).<sup>16</sup>

Like the wind, fire transforms things. Exposed to Oenothea's sensual fire, Encolpio rekindles the necessary potency for the completion of his journey, and within her own magical flames Oenothea, who is the very source of fire itself for the local inhabitants, metamorphoses from a beautiful young temptress into decaying flesh and then into a voluptuous earth mother. That Encolpio even seeks out the power of fire and exposes himself to it shows how much further advanced along the way he is than Ivan in The White Sheik, who failed to heed the Saying of the miraculous human flame thrower conjured for his witnessing by Cabiria, and consequently attests to how far Fellini as well has journeyed toward an understanding of the ways of fire. By Amarcord virtually the entire Borgo participates and celebrates fire's power to burn "the witch of winter" and usher in another spring in the ceremonial lighting of the fogarazze. Fire seems the inescapable prelude to a celebration of the light.<sup>17</sup> It is the elemental "dark night of the soul" through which all who journey toward individuation must pass.

And the earth itself functions in Fellini's films as the shelter of the elements. In Fellini-Satyricon Trimalchio at the banquet glories in his wealth by having a list read of his possessions and of the yield of his fields and the births of his animals and slaves. Within the oblivion of Being, the elements are treated in this way, as something owned, enumerated, catalogued, but their visual presence in Fellini's

films shows them to be something that never could be owned. They endure there within what Heidegger called the "self-secluding," just as their images endure within the projected white light that brings them forth. "All things of earth, and the earth itself as a whole," Heidegger writes,

flow together into a reciprocal accord. But this confluence is not a blurring of their outlines. Here there flows the stream, restless within itself, of the setting of bounds, which delimits everything present within its presence. . . . The earth is essentially self-secluding. To set forth the earth means to bring it into the Open as the self-secluding. (PLT, p. 47)<sup>18</sup>

Earth, and concomitantly the Open, is set forth in numerous ways in Fellini's films: in the ground to which Zampano, Augusto, and Cabiria are brought in their defeats; in *Il Matto's* pebble; in all those natural things to which Gelsomina seems to be deeply attuned; in the ground to which Pace pulls Guido after his attempt to "transcend"; in Guido's own refusal to escape the earth later in 8 1/2 and the descent of the cast and crew from the spaceship tower back to earth; in Juliet's victory walk among the pines; in the brown furrows of the soil where Eumolpus confers his gift; in the dirt center ring of The Clowns' last scene; in the Metro-Roma sequence in Roma; in all the perambulations of Amarcord's characters; in all the flesh of Fellini's animals, the mysterious horses of La Strada, Fellini-Satyricon, and Roma, the ox of Amarcord; and in the thoroughly corporeal, often grotesque bodies of Fellini's characters themselves.

## The Grotesque

As I have already observed, Fellini's films are distinguished by their grotesqueness. There is nothing more "Felliniesque" than his repeated fascination with deformity, scatology, and excess of all kinds. And yet Fellini himself insists that his works are not grotesque at all. He has explained, for example, that

When I introduce rather odd characters into my films, people say I'm exaggerating, that I'm "doing a Fellini." But it's just the opposite; in comparison with what happens to me all the time, I feel I'm softening things, moderating reality to a remarkable degree. (Strich, p. 52)<sup>19</sup>

And to Eileen Hughes' complaints about the monstrous qualities of the characters in Fellini-Satyricon, Fellini has retorted, "But they are not monsters. They are innocent. You are less innocent" (Hughes, p. 62).

Few of Fellini's critics and observers have endeavored to see the grotesqueness of his art as he himself sees it.<sup>20</sup> Most have tended to think of the Fellini-grotesque according to more traditional idealistic and judgmental aesthetics, perhaps best articulated by Wolfgang Kayser in his The Grotesque in Art and Literature. To him, the grotesque is

The expression of the estranged or alienated world. . . . [It] is a game with the absurd, in the sense that the grotesque artist plays, half laughingly, half horrified, with the deep absurdities of existence. The grotesque is an attempt to control and exorcise the demonic elements in the world.

The "unity of perspective" attained by all grotesque art has its source, Kayser insists, in the belief that "the divinity of poets and the shaping force of nature have already ceased to exist."<sup>21</sup> But does not Fellini (who has praised Toulouse-Lautrec's capacity for loving the "disinherited and the despised . . . those who are designated as depraved by 'respectable' people" and applauded the painter's conviction that "the purest and loveliest flowers thrive on waste land and rubbish



heaps," Strich, p. 56) see the "grotesque" in an entirely different light?<sup>22</sup> Like a Toulouse-Lautrec or a Sherwood Anderson, Fellini seems to be drawn toward the grotesque by an intuitive sense that these "gnarled apples" of experience are a prime shaping force for the imagination, an entry way into the mysterious, into what is hidden in the oblivion of Being.<sup>23</sup> His movies heed the Saying of the grotesque's more than rational distortion. The grotesque is to Fellini a "dissonance which leads to discovery" (see Appendix I).

Nowhere does the oblivion of Being proclaim itself in such an unabashed and revealing manner as in the standard aesthetic response to the grotesque. In it hidden transcendental biases become embarrassingly blatant.<sup>24</sup> When, for example, Mary Cass Canfield declares that the grotesque testifies that

The artist is ill. Life is too literal and he takes to his fancy. Life is too pervasively discordant and so his fancy does not soar, does not sanely and safely create beautiful rhythms, but becomes infected with unrest, turns ape to the actual, is a rebellious slave to what it would be free from

and claims that all "Grotesques are damned,"<sup>25</sup> or when Stuart Rosenthal sees the midget nun in Fellini's The Clowns as "unbalanced and threatening" (thus succumbing to the childish attitude which Fellini evolves beyond in the movie itself!),<sup>26</sup> they testify only to their own tendency to gloss and thereby to judge the creation; the grotesque is for them only a mirror which gives back to them their own reflections. Canfield's diction is itself a revelation: the grotesque prevents the artist from "soaring" (presumably above the earth), condemning him to the mimicking or aping of the actual, of which Canfield evidently feels he should be free. Canfield's Platonism is, however, strangely correct. The grotesque is, as she insists, a revelation of immanence; it is stamped "On the obverse of the medal of idealism."<sup>27</sup>

Of all the "useless baggage" which Fellini claims was laid upon him as a child, none has merited more of his ire than Western civilization's emphasis on the ideal. When he has talked or written of it, his eloquence reveals the same kind of emotional coupling of anger and disbelief that brings Grandfather out of his seat in Juliet of the Spirits to stop the pageant yelling, "What are you teaching these poor little girls?" Idealism is to Fellini the curse of the West.

In the 1965 Playboy interview, given during the filming of Juliet of the Spirits, can be found the fullest exposition of his thinking on the ideal. Ideals, Fellini argues, must be abandoned because they

'impose' impossible standards and unattainable aspirations that can only impede the spontaneous growth of a normal human being, and may conceivably destroy him. You must have experienced this yourself. There arrives a moment in life when you discover that what you've been told at home, at school, or in church is simply not true. You discover that it binds your authentic self, your instinct, your true growth. And this opens up a schism, creates a conflict that must eventually be resolved--or succumbed to. In all forms of neurosis there is this clash between certain forms of idealization in a moral sense and a contrary aesthetic form. (p. 60; my italics)

Fellini has attempted to discover the possible source of this neurosis of the ideal by outlining a miniature philosophy of history:

It all started with the Greeks when they enshrined a classic standard of physical beauty. A man who did not correspond to that type of beauty felt himself excluded, inferior, an outsider. Then came Christianity, which established an ethical beauty. This doubled man's problems by creating the dual possibility that he was neither beautiful as a Greek god or as holy as a Christian one. Inevitably, you were guilty of either nonbeauty or unsaintliness, and probably both. So you lived in disgrace: Man did not love you, nor did God. Thus you remained outside of life. (Playboy, 60)

This "outside of life" is Fellini's version of Heidegger's oblivion of Being (though Fellini came by it by intuition and not, like Heidegger, through a lengthy study of Western philosophy). This labyrinthine outsideness can, however, be escaped "by realizing that if you are not

beautiful, it's all right anyway; and if you're not a saint, that's all right too--because reality is not ideality" (Playboy, p. 60). As a recurrent way of the flesh in Fellini's imagination, the grotesque thus seems to serve as the essential "contrary aesthetic form" which, battling the ideal, seeks to overthrow the oblivion of Being and find the Open.<sup>28</sup>

The grotesque is the very opposite of entertainment as Gene Youngblood has defined it: it gives to us what we do not know we want.<sup>29</sup> For it is in fact a glimpse of the flesh which seems threatening to a fixed and stereotyped vision of the world. But it is essential to a world which can regenerate itself beyond the constrictions of any verbal logos. It shows forth the absence of a center or of eternal models; denying a perspective, it guarantees that the unfathomable ground will always produce new stories. It is an image, a synecdoche, for the source of narrative motion; beauty cannot make any such guarantee. As Annie Dillard has reminded, if the earth were smooth, our brains would be too.<sup>30</sup> The dissonance of the grotesque is the earth's convoluting power. A mimicry of the earth which fails to take account of the grotesque will forever remain outside.

The idealistic sense of beauty which the West has developed out of its commitment to a verbal logos is unfaithful to the hurling back and forth through oppositions (according to the sway of the primal energy of what the early Greeks called physis), the tension and unrest, which is more primordial and of which the grotesque is the non-euphemised image (IM, p. 113).<sup>31</sup> The beautiful feigns ignorance of its source, pretending to have sprung fully grown from the head of Zeus. The beautiful, Heidegger reminds, "does lie in form, but only because the forma once took its light from Being as the isness of what is" (PLT, p. 31).

Consequently then, the grotesque is no aberration; it is not, as  
Wallace Stevens saw,

a visitation. It is  
Not an apparition, but appearance, part  
Of that simplified geography, in which  
The sun comes up like news from Africa. (CP, p. 334)

When, therefore, a 1611 French and English dictionary defined the  
grotesque as that

wherein . . . all kinds of odd things are represented without  
any particular sence, or meaning, but only to feed the eye.<sup>32</sup>

it exhibited an unconscious wisdom. For the grotesque feeds the iris  
frettings of the eye primordially, a vision of the "flawed nature of  
perfection."<sup>33</sup>

The movies may very well be inherently grotesque. Bela Balazs  
observed that all early films were thought grotesque, due to the dis-  
tortions presented by huge eyes, mouths, etc. seen in close-up and the  
bizarre decapitation and dismemberment of bodies by the edges of the  
frame, all of which have now become conventionalized and so seldom seen  
in their first structure.<sup>34</sup> The movies have always presented an eccen-  
tric vision of the world and of an ever-changing kaleidoscopic inter-  
relationship with the flesh; obliterating the perspectivism of second  
structure, movies have destroyed the ideal of a reality seen by a  
spectator from a point of view. As early as 1923 Dziga Vertov extolled  
the genius of the "man with a movie camera" to "co-ordinate any and all  
points of the universe, wherever I want them to be. My ways lead  
toward the creation of a fresh perception of the world. Thus I explain  
in a new way the world unknown to you."<sup>35</sup> The grotesque is a vital  
part of this "fresh perception" whose Saying is of the uncategorizable  
uniqueness of the real.

By its reversal of the ideal, the grotesque overthrows as well what the Russian critic Mikhail Bakhtin has called the "bodily canon of art" which has dominated Western art since the Renaissance. In his ingenious Rabelais and His World Bakhtin argues that in the past four hundred years a preoccupation with politeness, taste, manners, and rational, institutional values has eclipsed a previous fascination with the "grotesque body" which had its roots in folklore and is readily apparent as the shaping force behind Rabelais' exuberant but thoroughly grotesque genius. The grotesque body depicted in pre-Renaissance art is one which unashamedly "fecundates and is fecundated, that gives birth and is born, devours and is devoured, drinks, defecates, is sick and dying."<sup>36</sup> The "bodily canon of art" which became predominant was, on the other hand, an attempt to assert that man was somehow outside of the hierarchy of the cosmos, beyond it (p. 364). It stresses that man is a finished product, a character, and in its reductionism attempts to seal off the bodily processes of organic life from their interchange with the outside (p. 321). The bodily canon therefore seeks to:

- 1) eliminate protrusions; 2) close all orifices; 3) stop all mergers of the body with something outside; 4) hide all signs of inner life processes; 5) ignore all evidence of fecundation and pregnancy;
- 6) present an image of a completed, individual body (p. 320).<sup>37</sup>

Now Fellini's imagination clearly has no respect for this canon. Its every principle is violated in his movies. Movies are by their very nature, as W. R. Robinson has shown, a "strip tease" which seeks out the skin and body of the world as its subject, the conceptual and abstract being for it an impossibility.<sup>38</sup> Fellini's resurrection of the grotesque body springs in part from his dedication to this innate capacity of the movies. But it comes as well from a temperamental love

of it in a creator to whom, for example, a man named Fafinon in his home town who could produce an unlimited number of farts on command seems a "marvellous man!" (Strich, p. 24).<sup>39</sup> Stripping away the gloss of the bodily canon, Fellini's presentation of the grotesque within the larger body of the flesh in general is of a body in the act of becoming, "a point," Bakhtin would say, "of transition in a life eternally renewed, the inexhaustible vessel of death and conception" (p. 318), in which the cosmic elements enter into man and make him vividly aware of the presence of the cosmos, that which is without, passing within him (p. 335-36).<sup>40</sup>

A mother at the burlesque show in Roma ushers her young son into the aisle to relieve himself, although another woman looks on aghast and complains "What if we all started pissing?" In the same film, the young Fellini, inspecting his new living quarters, happens on a jubilant young boy triumphantly announcing from his perch on a toilet, "I've done it!" In Amarcord urination is celebrated in the poems recited by Grandfather. And in Fellini-Satyricon, Trimalchio and others void themselves at table. Farting and belching are also prominent, almost exhibitional, in Fellini-Satyricon at Vernacchio's and at the banquet (where Trimalchio's burps are even read by an interpreter), in the acts of the clowns, and throughout Amarcord. The scatological grotesque increases in prominence throughout Fellini's career, reaching, as I will show, its zenith in Amarcord.

Scenes of eating, in I Vitelloni, La Strada, La Dolce Vita, likewise show the grotesque body's exchange with its world, culminating in the gustatory exhibitions of Trimalchio's banquet, in the open-air restaurants of Roma (where truly Rabelaisian wisdom--"What you eat, you

shit!"--is understood), and in Amarcord's family dinner scene. The bodily canon's prohibitions against open orifices and protrusions are further broken in Fellini's films by the often repeated gesture of a wiggling, out-thrust tongue (in most of Fellini's children, in nymphomaniacs and prostitutes, and in the Polynesian youth at the entrance to the Insula Felicles). The canon's denial of sexuality and fecundity is overthrown by the sensual passion exhibited by Sylvia in La Dolce Vita, Saraghina in 8 1/2, Suzy in Juliet, the nymphomaniacs in Fellini-Satyricon and Ariadne and Oenoe as well, the druggist's wife in Roma, and Gradisca and Venus in Amarcord.

And all the deformity and aberration of Fellini's freaks, the thousands of bizarre faces (which in Fellini-Satyricon even take on the quality of a James Ensor or Francis Bacon image), the midget wrestlers, gigantic and obese women, "tiny grannies," hermaphrodites, severed arms, legless and armless men, shapeless sea creatures ("Is it possible that nobody knows which is the front and which is the rear?" asks Pierone), swollen heads, do not present evidence to Fellini's imagination that, as Van Gogh put it, the world is "a study that didn't come off." They make evident rather only what Annie Dillard has so beautifully described as the shadows, the "blue strips" which run through the creation and require of the seer that he regard it, not merely as a dark mark, but as "making some sort of sense of the light." For as Dillard has seen:

They give the light distance; they put it in its place. They inform my eyes of my location here . . . here in the world's flawed sculpture, here in the flickering shade of the nothingness between me and the light.<sup>41</sup>

The Saying of the grotesque in Fellini's films, by actively combating the tyranny of the ideal, hints at a new realization that, as Annie Dillard puts it, "Creation itself was the fall, a burst into the thorny beauty of the real."<sup>42</sup>

## Madmen and Clowns

In Madness and Civilization, Michel Foucault has shown how the Age of Reason systematically excluded from its midst the presence of the mad, locking them away in asylums in much the same way that lepers were once banished from human society previous to the Renaissance. But with this exclusion of those who were thought by the Middle Ages to be perfect emblems of the hazards of the passage of human life, the voyagers par excellence, came, Foucault argues, the virtual neglect of the issues which their presence raised. Is man mad? Is the direction of human civilization a desirable one?<sup>43</sup> (Foucault's thesis, it should be noted, directly parallels Bakhtin's: both see civilization since the Renaissance as repressive of the most elemental aspects of the human journey.) I have already shown how Fellini's art violates the dictates of the "bodily canon's" injunctions against the grotesque and scatological, and Fellini exhibits likewise a reluctance to accept the Age of Reason's mandated exclusion of the mad from human view. The mad in his films seem always present, most noticeably Guidizio in I Vitelloni, The Clowns, Roma, and Amarcord, Gelsomina, Uncle Teo, and that special subset of the mad known as clowns.

Gelsomina is apparently not "mad," but more specifically a "fool," or at least slightly retarded. Her mother explains to her at the beginning of La Strada, when Zampano comes to purchase her, that "It's not your fault you're different from the rest," and truly she seems to be in touch with a level of reality which no one else in the film, except, of course, Il Matto can possibly understand. She reads the air and predicts "it will rain in three days." She puts her ear to a telegraph pole and seems to be able to read its inhuman vibrations. In the presence of the



sea she feels at home, directed by its motions. She plants tomatoes at a stop along the way, although she will never see them grow. She lives before the oblivion of Being, in her ignorance unable to gloss her world and hence attuned to Sayings beyond mere rational speech.

Giudizio, likewise a fool, shares with Gelsomina a kind of mad wisdom (his name, in fact, means "wisdom"). In I Vitelloni, he cannot take his eyes off the angel which Fausto and Moraldo have stolen. In The Clowns and Roma he is more Rabelaisian, making obscene gestures at a woman in the former (who threatens him with castration) and in the latter preferring to play with himself than indulge in nostalgia about the greatness of Caesar and the past. In Roma he appears in one shot staring out at the rain, his face pressed closely against a window covered with water droplets. This identification of him with the elements continues in Amarcord where he becomes their herald (see Chapter Four).

Unlike Gelsomina and Giudizio, Uncle Teo, Aurelio's mad brother in Amarcord, is not free. When we first see him, he is locked away in an asylum in the country. But Fellini's imagination seeks him out there and brings him before the camera's inspection. Like Fellini's other mad, he seems "out of his mind" from being too much involved in the mysteries of the earth. His powers of attention are intense and his sense of wonder is huge (see Chapter Four). He seems almost a prototype of the visionary artist in his ability to respect and to heed the more than rational distortion present in the visible creation, lacking only the necessary concentration to convert his experience into the work of art.

Like the mad, Fellini's clowns also live in a world of wonder, but they convert their wonder into an art form in the circus and by so

doing become much more than merely the reminder of the ever-present mystery with which they have not lost touch: clowns are almost angels. On numerous occasions Fellini has claimed that if it were not for the movies, the circus would have been his vocation.<sup>44</sup> Both, he observes, are ways of living and creating at one and the same time and hence have an instant appeal to his "seamless" imagination. The circus, he writes, is

a way of life, a way of representing itself, which has gathered together within itself, in an exemplary way, certain lasting myths: adventure, travel, risk, danger, speed, stepping into the limelight. . . . and at the same time, there is the more mortifying aspect of it which keeps recurring, the fact that people come to see you and you must exhibit yourself; that they examine you in this monstrous way and have this biological, racial right to come and say: "Well, here I am, make me laugh, excite me, make me cry." (Strich, pp. 121-22)

As such, the circus is to Fellini not just a show. Like the movies, which must be made "by living them, by making them vital rhythms" (Levine, p. 79), the circus is "an experience of life. It is a way of travelling through one's own life." The ecstasy Fellini claims to feel in its presence is due to his own total commitment to "that noise and music, to those monstrous apparitions, to those threats of death" which the circus embodies. The type of show which the circus is, "based on wonder and fantasy, on jokes and nonsense, on fables and on the lack of any coldly intellectual meaning," he claims, "is just the thing for me" (Strich, pp. 121-23). And the people of the circus, the exhibitors of "joy in its purest form," remain to him the "only people in the world I will always understand" (Vilallonga, p. 95).

The circus has long seemed to Fellini, ever since his first experience of it as a child, to be "almost a remembrance." "How is it," he has asked, "that I already know all about the circus, about its

innermost recesses, its lights, its smells? I know it. I have always known it" (Strich, p. 121). Because the magic circle of the circus, "A world without frontiers, as vast as the imagination," is where Fellini first made contact with "Life. Real Life. The one which is beyond understanding" (Vilallonga, p. 96), the circus is to him, consequently, a "shock of recognition" that his most tacit experience of life is in rhyme with the world, with the world of the circus at least, with its Saying. The circus proclaims to him that "reality is not ideality"; its Saying is thus akin to his own genius.

And within the circus nothing has captivated his interest more than clowns. In a marvellous essay entitled "Why Clowns?" written to accompany his movie made for Italian television, Fellini provides an extensive analysis of the importance they hold for his imagination. The clown, Fellini writes, is

The incarnation of a fantastic creature who expresses the irrational aspect of man; he stands for the instinct, for whatever is rebellious in each of us and whatever stands up to the established order of things. He is a caricature of man's childish and animal aspects, the mocker and the mocked. (Strich, p. 123)

In the figure of the clown, moreover, the true nature of the grotesque becomes apparent. The clown, Fellini suggests, is really only a "mirror in which man sees himself in a grotesque, deformed, ridiculous image" due to his own sense of inadequacy; he is the victim of a human tendency toward the deformation of the world. As such, he is man's shadow, a manifestation of his own weakness and of his projection of his own self image into the world, a shadow which, as Fellini explains, can be eradicated only by the sun's being directly overhead, as it is in the vision of the "completely enlightened man" who eliminates the grotesque aspects of the world by assimilating them into his own being (Strich, p. 124). Because they are such true tests of accommodation to the ways of the

flesh, it seems only natural that Fellini regards clowns as his muses and identifies them with his angel:

If pressed to do so, I might say that clowns--these grotesque, off-beat versions of drunkards, gossip-mongers, tramps--in their complete irrationality, their violence and their abnormal whims, are an apparition from my childhood, a prophecy, the anticipation of my vocation, "the annunciation made to Federico." (Strich, p. 121; my italics)

Fellini has differentiated brilliantly between the two basic types of clowns: the white and the Auguste. The white clown is a representative bourgeois, powerful, with a ghostly face, extravagant eyebrows, a cold, narrow mouth, and dandified dress. He makes the Auguste, his partner, do what he wants. He is bossy, overbearing, punctilious. He is, says Fellini, "the perfect image of an education that shows life in idealized and abstract terms" (Strich, p. 124-25). He stands for repression itself. He has his fine points: for he stands for "elegance, grace, harmony, intelligence, lucidity" as well (Strich, p. 134), but in all of his aspects he represents "What should be done." The Auguste clown, on the other hand, is a sinner, the "child who dirties his pants" and rebels against all these values, not because they are not attractive, for he does admire them, but because, in the presence of the white clown, they are "so priggishly displayed." The white and the Auguste are, respectively, the Oliver Hardy and Stan Laurel, the yang and the yin of most comedy teams. Fellini has described beautifully the conflict between them as

the struggle between the proud cult of reason (which comes to be a bullying form of aestheticism) and the freedom of instinct. The white clown and the Auguste are teacher and child, mother and small son, even the angel with the flaming sword and the sinner. In other words, they are two psychological aspects of man: one which aims upwards, the other which aims downwards; two divided, separated instincts. (Strich, pp. 124-25)

In The Clowns Fellini originally even intended to include a scene in

which during his crew's travels about Rome everyone in the street, old women, bishops, businessmen in bowlers, turned into clowns (Strich, p. 129). If all of Fellini's own characters were thought of as clowns and classified according to these categories, certainly Moraldo, Gelsomina, Cabiria, Guido, Juliet, and the youth of Amarcord would have to be considered as foremost examples of the Auguste personality, while Ivan, Zampano, Oscar, Steiner, Daumier, Juliet's mother, and the teachers of Amarcord are among the classic white clowns.

Fellini has even undertaken to classify some twentieth century personalities using these categories of white and Auguste. Antonioni, for example, is "one of those sad, silent, speechless Augustes," while another Italian director, Visconti, is "a white clown with great authority." Mussolini is an Auguste; Hitler is a white clown. Sigmund Freud is also a white clown, while Jung, a Fellini hero, is an Auguste. Picasso, another Fellini hero,<sup>45</sup> is a "triumphant Auguste, brazen, without complexes, able to do anything" (Strich, p. 130). These classifications are fascinating and revealing, both about the person who is so classed and about Fellini himself, but one other of his characterizations is, I believe, worthy of individual attention, for it not only manifests Fellini's perspicacity and wisdom in an undeniable manner, but provides as well another key to his films: it is his delineation of Albert Einstein.

Einstein, although a physicist and a mathematician and considered to be, by the layman at least, the most abstruse and otherworldly of thinkers, Fellini sees as "a dreamy Auguste, entranced, saying nothing," who is able "at the last minute" to pull "out of his bag the solution to the problem given him by the white clown" (Strich, p. 13). How can this be? Einstein, the prime mover of the thought of the twentieth

century, of the era in which movies and the art of light have had their birth, an Auguste? A sinner? Fellini's characterization, interestingly, agrees completely with that of the scientist Jacob Bronowski. According to Bronowski, Einstein's discovery of relativity brought an end to the domination in western thought of a god-like view of the world which had begun with Sir Isaac Newton, a believer in absolute space and absolute time. Relativity, Bronowski argues, humbles us, returning us to the indeterminacy of man's own participatory view of the world.<sup>46</sup> Thus Newton would then be the white clown of Fellini's description, presenting to Einstein the problem of human perception to which he supplied the answer: man is embodied and cannot have the knowledge of a god; he can only from within his own flesh seek, through the play of his senses, an imaginative interpenetration with his world. The wisdom contained in Fellini's understanding of Einstein is in fact also the real shaping force behind his art: Fellini's films, like Einstein's scientific vision, are products of an Auguste imagination which delights in puncturing the balloon of absolutism; they radiate a new kind of humility (remembering that the word, having the same derivation as "humus," literally means a return to the earth) which has its seeds in perception and imagination.

The presence of the Auguste clown and of the circus in Fellini's art signals a return to the earth. Think of the group of circus musicians who stand at the foot of the launch tower in 8 1/2, of the circus in Juliet of the Spirits in which Juliet's guardian angel Grandfather first meets Fanny, of the thoroughly pedestrian burlesque show in Roma, of the re-unification of white and Auguste in the open center ring of The Clowns--an image, to Fellini's own mind at least, of "the reconciliation of opposites, the unity of being" (Strich, p. 124); all portray

immersion in the flesh, a commitment to that "Miraculous sin . . . by which one lives" (Vilallonga, p. 95).

## Children

When Daumier shouts at Guido in 8 1/2 concerning the Saraghina episode, "But these are only childhood memories; they mean nothing for the film," he reveals the Cartesian, dualistic bias which prevents the integration of past and present and makes it impossible to retrace the bread crumbs (to use Garry Trudeau's analogy, see the epigraph to Chapter One) and remember oneself with the quality of experience and perception which lies before the imposition of the oblivion of Being. Guido and Fellini thankfully ignore him, making the Saying of children an important hinting of the way.

Fellini's own extraordinary sense of wonder and, consequently, the very fabric of his imagination seems to stem from his "magic childhood." He has claimed:

I had a magic childhood. . . . Three elements dominated it; the sea, the circus, and the church. My childhood is a dream I keep building my whole life long. Nothing real has ever happened to me. I have invented it all. (Vilallonga, p. 94)

Fellini once explained that when he was a child "It didn't seem to me that I would grow up--and basically I wasn't even wrong" (Kezich, p. 34). "For me," as he told Lilian Ross, "it is exactly as it was thirty years ago, when I was a boy. Inside myself I am exactly the same. . . . I think I am a lucky man."<sup>47</sup> Because he has retained so vividly in his own eye pouch the sense of openness to the mystery which precedes even the "first there is a mountain" stage, making it an all powerful search image within his own perception, he has been able to transfer its radiance to the children in his films. They seem to be in constant

contact with a world of mystery which most adults refuse to acknowledge, with what Fellini has called "Life. Real Life. The one which is beyond understanding" which he associates as well with the spectacle of the circus.

The vibrant energy of the Fellini child in motion makes manifest this "Real Life." The children in Fellini's films seem linked in spirit and in earthiness to his madmen and clowns. They know that life is spectacle and seem motivated to act as tour guides through that spectacle for those whose attention might not notice the wonders. They drag Gelsomina, a sort of fellow spirit, to a secret upstairs room to exhibit Oswaldo, a boy with a giant head; they escort the young Fellini in Roma to another secret room in order to see a "tiny granny" and dance ecstatically at this revelation. And although they are themselves sometimes afraid to look (as in The Clowns, where the ringmaster's presentation of the Siamese twins--"You see them little boy? Aren't they nice?--and of the other grotesques of the circus summons only terror), is it not because their very education teaches them not to see (as in Roma where the slide of a naked girl prompts from the teachers frantic injunctions of "Don't look" and an abortive effort to block out the image on the screen)? But their openness to the mystery is not easily closed. They know the sesame which summons wonder, the Asa Nisi Masa, which makes the eyes move in the still picture, and they understand as well that "Where the eyes stare, that's where the treasure is," an understanding which most Fellini adults never abide in, until Juliet receives the gift of this wisdom from her television set (see Chapter Three).

Although made to cross the Rubicon (as in the first scene of Roma) into a relation with the earth which they would never choose for



themselves, their own version of morality, a kind of "pure draft" kind (see Appendix V) at least momentarily holds sway. It is in Amarcord that the world of the child, his lack of respect for the adult forces which seek to dominate him, comes most fully into view (see Chapter Four), but it is apparent in earlier films as well. In La Dolce Vita, Steiner's boy "bursts out laughing with delight" at any thought or image which interests him; all seems to him, in direct contrast with the morbidity of his father, an object of play. And when his father holds him, he exclaims over and over "Big-headed papa," perfectly understanding the severely abstract intellectuality which pervades everything and everyone in Steiner's presence. To the Fellini child, the serious things of adult life are games. In La Dolce Vita, for example, the children who have seen the Madonna are actually playing a game. Although thousands have turned out at the scene of the miracle, their seriousness is ludicrously undercut by a close-up shot of the two children who, as they run about haphazardly pointing to the location of the Madonna, are seen to be furtively giggling to themselves at the irony of their game's success. Even death seems to be a game. In Roma at the young Fellini's first rooming house, a child's voice exclaims triumphantly from an upper story "I'm throwing the cat." And in Amarcord, at the death of Miranda, children play on as if nothing has happened (see Chapter Four). Always Auguste clowns, always sinners, Fellini's children seem the very medium of the vital reminders of earth's regenerative power, of its leap beyond death into renewal. Their saying is like spring's. They exist in a prototype, "pure draft" open which precedes all insideness and outsideness.

# Inside/Outside

The nightmare is the result of a sudden doubt as to the certainty of inside and the distinctness of outside.

Gaston Bachelard

One upon a time there was a little boy and he went outside.

Harry Partch (from a poster seen  
in a children's publishing company)

In 8 1/2 Guido, in an often repeated gesture, pushes his glasses down his nose and peers over the top at events before him which may be taking place in "reality" or in his imagination, the appearance of Saraghina, the reconciliation of his mistress Carla with his wife Luisa, the various apparitions of Claudia, etc. To Guido, imagination and reality seem to form a single "seamless web"; reality is for him ceaselessly participatory and his imagination, as the screen tests reveal, is made up of the same contents as his "real" experience.<sup>48</sup> Such a relationship with the world, in which the boundary line between insideness and outsideness begins to break down, would seem to most people insanity, or at the very least nightmarish, as Gaston Bachelard has suggested (see above). But it is, as Owen Barfield and others have undertaken to show, a very ancient attitude, one which shapes the magical participatory universe of "primitive" peoples, a universe in which we still tacitly remain, despite our claims of objectivity.<sup>49</sup> It seems natural that Guido, a movie director, should experience the world so, for just such participatory imagination lies at the very source of the art of the movies, a medium whose objective reality is completely altered by the participatory spectating of the viewer (see Appendix V).

And yet the advent of Guido's participatory imagination threatens him at first with extinction. He begins the film enclosed claustrophobically within his car in a traffic jam in a tunnel, surrounded by menacing, lifeless faces in the other cars, his only hope of relief the light which lies ahead at the end of the tunnel. In the scene's absolute silence, Guido finds himself solipsistically trapped inside a world which his screenwriter Daumier later extolls as "the only real perfection."<sup>50</sup> But the easiest immediate solution to this insideness, in which the self and the world seem hopelessly at odds, is to escape altogether, as Guido tries to do, at first by floating up and away from the earth, until Pace pulls him abruptly down, and later by continuing with his project to film an apocalyptic story about the desertion of the earth and by imagining his own suicide. That the earth needs to be escaped is due, however, not just to the menacing presence of those who surround Guido with their demands; it is a result of the basic incompatibility of their realities with the summoning he receives in those glances over his glasses: the hints of the more than rational distortion to his burgeoning imagination.

For the pure presence of things, exerting its "pressure of reality" on an individual imagination, can overwhelm it, as Jorge Luis Borges' "Funes the Memorious" learns (see Appendix I). Gaston Bachelard once observed that the business of the poet is to "put language in danger." When the imagination passes from the insideness of a glossed perceptual world out into the outsideness of a first experience with the "wild logos" (Merleau-Ponty) of the flesh, the image itself, not language, is put in danger.<sup>51</sup> Outsideness threatens to shipwreck man, as the French critic Roger Munier has warned, in an alien world (see Appendix V).

In 8 1/2 and in the films which follow it in the Fellini canon up to Amarcord the conventional image of the world is put in danger by Fellini's imaginative exploration of the play of the more than rational distortion in his art: 8 1/2, Juliet of the Spirits, Fellini-Satyricon, The Clowns, and Roma, all follow the way of the flesh which might be called outsideness. They are cinematic narratives in which, as in the second stage of the Zen parable, "mountains are not mountains, trees are not trees, rivers are not rivers." Each seeks to return from it, to accomplish the feat which his producer Pace performs for Guido: to bring the imagination down to earth and establish autochthony there. Amarcord is, as I will show, this return, which retrospectively makes sense of the outsideness of the films which precede it.

Richard Schickel once lamented that Fellini's 8 1/2 "represents . . . the death of the cinema as a public art, whose function has been to hold a mirror up to the physical world not the inner world of the creator."<sup>52</sup> What Schickel has here failed to recognize is the degree to which the "inner" world of the creator comes to shape that physical reality (which he believes the movies only need "mirror"); he does not understand, as Wallace Stevens did, that every "potent figure" of imagination, every "major man," "creates the world to which we turn incessantly and without knowing it and . . . gives to life the supreme fictions without which we are unable to conceive of it" (NA, p. 31) and that 8 1/2 is the work of such a reality-generating imagination. To call 8 1/2 a picture of an "inner world" is, in the first place, a half truth unfaithful to what Bachelard called the "dialectic of inside and outside" within which man begins, by heeding the Saying of the truly concrete poetically, to make new facts. 8 1/2 is not an "inside" story, as Schickel would have us believe. It is an outside story, dominated

by the sway of the more than rational distortion and its traces. Such a story is essential, as the wisdom of the Zen parable and the Biblical tale of the prodigal son recognize.<sup>53</sup> But before such a narrative ever could be, there must be as well a truly inside story from which to emerge outside. Fellini's films before 8 1/2 are, I believe, such inside stories.

An inside story is essentially a narrative of life within the oblivion of Being. Heidegger has insisted that men live in such a way that they "are not there" (OWL, p. 83) because they forget "how it is with being" and do not even know that they have forgotten. In insideness man does not participate in his world. It stands over against him, an alien realm of depth to conquer set against the ground of an always remote horizon, and yet one in which all is common and ordinary: mountains are mountains and trees are trees. Insideness, if I may say so, is therefore an outsideness as well, for since it denies participation and makes reason the only lifeline to the real, extolling the ideal as the proper fruition of human activity, it abstracts man from dwelling within the way of the earth, makes him an outsider, a solipsist, who in his self-congratulatory way proclaims himself to be the measure of all things.

The figures of this insideness in Fellini's films are striking: Fausto in I Vitelloni and Zampano in La Strada, both uncaring egotists bent only on their own pleasure; Matilda in Nights of Cabiria, the old prostitute who nightly vents her lonely rage against everything; the actor Nazzari in the same film, hidden within his fortress-home; Steiner in La Dolce Vita, literally above the earth in his Tower of Babel apartment, able to make contact with the ordinary ways of the flesh only through the means of recorded bird calls and natural sounds, a

man whom his house guest Iris sees with great accuracy is really "the true primitive. Primitive as a gothic steeple. . . . so high that our voices grow faint in trying to reach up to you"; Daumier in 8 1/2, a nihilist, and Gloria, who is writing a "thesis on 'The Solitude of Modern Man in Contemporary Theatre'"; Ascylo in Fellini-Satyricon, who is really a throwback to Fausto and Zampano in his careless hedonism and who remains at his death, as Encolpio observes "far . . . from his destiny"; Remy in The Clowns, the clown historian who has clearly never felt the clowns' true magic; the headless, bodiless vestments of the clergy on parade in Roma's "ecclesiastical fashion show"; the college of cardinals as mouldering skeletons; and the teachers of Amarcord, detached, refusing to participate in any of the events of the seasons.

In both 8 1/2 and The Clowns, fakirs are locked up beneath the earth, awaiting emergence, as are all figures in an inside narrative. In an inside narrative Zampano's drunken declaration in the cafe at the end of La Strada--"I don't need anyone"--predominates. Inside, the ultimate value is, as Steiner explains to Marcello, "to love one another outside of time, beyond time. Detached . . . To live detached." Inside, the promptings of the angel cannot be heeded: in La Strada Zampano's hatred for the fool's ability to generate stories about him causes him to murder the angelic Il Matto and Gelsomina's insane lament--"The fool is not well"--could be taken as a comment on the value which the Saying of the angel solicits in an inside narrative. La Dolce Vita, when Paolo, who is, like Il Matto, associated with angels (Marcello tells her she looks like an angel from an Umbrian church), cannot make herself understood by Marcello, it is because the narrative, and Fellini's own imagination, is still inside. But with 8 1/2 the angelic makes its presence felt and the emergence outside begins.

"Man," Bachelard has suggested, "is half-open being."<sup>54</sup> It is because of this that he is capable of "intertwining" with the flesh. But the initial experience of this openness is an almost overpowering revelation; it produces an estrangement from the ordinary in which nothing is what it seems. In The White Sheik Rivoli and Wanda venture out onto the sea and attempt to consummate their fantastic passion, but what ensues cinematically is a whiteout created by the boat sail's filling the frame. In Juliet of the Spirits, Juliet's head lowers, filling the frame with the whiteness of her hat, and from this whiteness is generated a barge filled with bizarre invaders. And in Roma the Pope virtually disappears into the radiant whiteness which surrounds him, while a female onlooker calls out to him "Come back! Come back!" In each of these instances nothing is what it seems, for appearance is threatened with extinction by the primordial whiteness which summons its return. In outsideness, this whiteness seems menacingly present and the ordinary meaning of the world seems always about to collapse: like the woman before the Pope, man must call on physical reality to "come back." For in outsideness man re-experiences that light which he once was (Condillac) and glimpses for the first time his actual responsibility for the creation. Heidegger's great question, "What is truth that it has to happen in such a thing as something created?" (PLT, p. 60) steers all the movements of outsideness and shapes its story.

With La Dolce Vita's "annulment" of man's marriage to the rational and the institutional, insideness plays itself out as a narrative force; at its end Marcello is left trying to orchestrate chaos. With 8 1/2 Fellini's imagination begins to seek in the midst of the dissonant present of the re-memberings of his eye-pouch the form of outside narrative. In so doing, traditional movie narration is abandoned, as

Richard Schickel observed. In the films which follow, in Juliet's similar blend of imagination and reality, Fellini-Satyricon's bas-relief, transitionless design, the autobiographical, imaginative documentaries The Clowns and Roma (at the very beginning of which Fellini explains that it "does not have a story," that it is rather "another kind of story," full of "strange contradictory images"), Fellini seeks to find a way to blend the "real" and the "imagined," to develop what he has called a "cine-mendacity."

In Roma Core Vidal explains that Romans are masterful "makers of illusions" and ponders whether or not "the last illusion" (Stevens' supreme fiction?) is at hand. Fellini's interview with Vidal appears in a scene of the film which deals with the Fiesta de Noantri, "the festival of ourselves," a scene intended, as Fellini's own narration informs us, to complete his "portrait." But is not that completion the coming of the last illusion as well? At Roma's end a mass of motorcyclists circle Roman landmarks at two in the morning. Their noise is the only sound to be heard at all, aside from the continual flow of the fountains. The camera follows their burst of acceleration and moves with it as they disappear into darkness in the fadeout of the last image. Four years before in Fellini-Satyricon, the narrative ended in a journey, Encolpio joining the crew of a ship bound for Africa and "for unknown lands." Boarding with him was a Negro, no doubt a slave, who seemed joyous beyond description. He was happy, it seems clear, because he was going home. Similarly, at the end of Roma Fellini's imaginative burst is joyous. For it is the last vestige of waywardness within him: in Amarcord he returns home. And although the motorcycles of Roma return there, in the form of the playful Greased Lightning's disruption of events, his presence is vestigial. He never roars into



the distance, for the distance has become proximal and man's relation to the earth face-to-face.

### The Face-to-Face

For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face;  
now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am  
known.

I Corinthians, 13:12

In Ingmar Bergman's Face to Face, Tomas explains to Jenny after her attempted suicide a private "incantation" whose magical function he explains is to give to those who "do not believe" an experience of what it would be like to feel real:

Now and then I say it over silently to myself. . . . I wish that someone or something would affect me so that I can become real. . . . To hear a human voice and be sure that it comes from someone who is made just like I am. To touch a pair of lips and in the same thousandth of a second know that this is a pair of lips. Not to have to live through the hideous moment needed for my experience to check that I've really felt a pair of lips. Reality would be to know that a joy is a joy and above all that a pain has to be a pain.<sup>55</sup>

Tomas' desire to confront the real is, of course, a manifestation of the experience implied in the movie's very title. It is achieved in the movie itself, however, only verbally, if at all. But in Fellini's films the face-to-face becomes almost matter-of-fact, another way of the flesh.

By face-to-face I mean any occasion in which a character comes to look directly at the camera, acknowledging its presence (which is, ordinarily, only tacit). In movies, such a device is sometimes used gratuitously in order to establish the authenticity of a character or the supposed straightforwardness or honesty of a director's approach (as, for example, in Alan Randolph's Welcome to L.A., where Geraldine Chaplin addresses the camera in extended monologue the very first time she

appears, confessing all her doubts and insecurities).<sup>56</sup> But as a way of the flesh, does not a face-to-face need to be earned, discovered? Are not the ways of the flesh much more shy than a director like Randolph would suggest?

The face-to-face does not really make any decisive appearance in Fellini's films until the end of Nights of Cabiria when Cabiria for a second acknowledges her return to life by her glance at the camera. In La Dolce Vita, it reoccurs in Paola's encounter with the camera in that movie's last image, and it appears again decisively in Juliet of the Spirits (see Chapter Three). In Fellini-Satyricon, it is used prolifically: Encolpio and Ascylo both address the camera in soliloquy (Encolpio in the movie's very first scene); various people at Trimalchio's banquet boldly acknowledge the camera's voyeuristic presence; and in a sense, all the characters come face-to-face in their images on the broken wall at the finale. With Fellini-Satyricon, the face-to-face ceases to be shy. In The Clowns, performers constantly address the camera. In Roma, as befits its documentary style, many answer the camera's probing into their doings directly (for example: Gore Vidal and Anna Magnani allow themselves to be interviewed by it), and even the Roman paintings discovered in the Metro-Roma excavation seem, to one of the members of Fellini's crew, to "be looking at us." In Amarcord, direct address to the camera is common in the narrations of both Giudizio and the Lawyer (see Chapter Four). The shy, reserved glimpse of Cabiria's initial face-to-face evolves, after Juliet of the Spirits, into a matter-of-fact and extremely direct confrontation and an acknowledgement, consequently, of the presence of the art in the art. For in Juliet of the Spirits, as I will show, the face-to-face comes into its own; it is earned; its nature is discovered. But what is its

nature? The complete answer to that question will have to come later, but it can at least be hinted at here.

Heidegger, noting that Goethe had a particular fondness for the expression "face to face" in his writings, comments that a certain kind of relationship prevails in face-to-faceness, one in which

all things are open to one another in their self concealment: thus one extends itself to the other, and thus all remain themselves; one is over the other as its guardian watching over the other, over it as its veil. (PLT, p. 104)

Such openness is impossible in the presence of calculative minds which, in their attitude of dominance, establish a relationship with things which is actually a regression to primitive and animal conditions, where all tribal and social hierarchies are established by eye-to-eye contact. Since the camera itself is not intrinsically calculative, the movies should theoretically then be able, as the only art which, as Bazin suggests, "derives an advantage from man's absence" (Bazin, I, p. 13), to achieve the face-to-faceness with the world which Heidegger describes. But the attainment of such face-to-faceness, in which one of the ways of the flesh becomes the sheltering agent for the rest, requires an evolution of imagination from the Inside to the Outside to the Open. For the face-to-face of the movies can be in its Saying the conferral of the achieved accommodation to the earth within the work's mimicry on to the viewer, a transfusion which prepares the way for Tomas' fervent wish to become real, to become a reality.

<sup>1</sup>Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978). Or see Philip Thomson's The Grotesque (London: Methuen, 1972). Thomson, when he considers the role of the grotesque in film, can think only of Fellini as an example (p. 57).

<sup>2</sup>Fellini himself has insisted that his "doing a Fellini" is not all that unusual, claiming that his movies do not differ visually from

the basic "look" of any party he has attended (T. Burke, New York Times, 8 Feb. 1970, p. 10).

<sup>3</sup>The Gay Science. Trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), pp. 273-74.

<sup>4</sup>Quoted in Miller, The Disappearance of God (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), pp. 287-88.

<sup>5</sup>For a further exploration of Fellini's art in terms of Oriental aesthetics, see Chapter Four.

<sup>6</sup>Cited in Andrews, p. 224.

<sup>7</sup>Poulet, for example, declares that he is most attracted to a writer who goes to the depths and becomes conscious of "a fundamental defeat" (J. Hillis Miller, "The Literary Criticism of George Poulet," Modern Language Notes, LXXVIII (1963), p. 485). On Levinas and Blanchot, see Lawall, Critics of Consciousness (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 1-17. On Beckett, see below.

<sup>8</sup>Samuel Beckett and Georges Duthuit, "Three Dialogues," in Samuel Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Martin Esslin (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1965), pp. 17, 19, 21.

<sup>9</sup>Guido's desire to "put everything in" has its twentieth century poetic counterparts; it seems to be a "shock of recognition" in fact. In William Carlos Williams' early poem "The Wanderer," for example, the poet reaches a point at which he willingly takes the plunge into the "filthy Passaic" of experience, at which point he feels

the river . . . enter my heart . . .

Till I felt the utter depth of its rottenness

The vile breadth of its degradation

And dropped down knowing this was me now. (Collected Early Poetry, p. 11)

And Wallace Stevens in "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," describes how his "Canon Aspirin" returns from his abstractions, his search for the "point/Beyond which thought could not progress as thought," to choose to "include the things/That in each other are included, the whole./The complicate, the amassing harmony" (CP, pp. 402-403).

<sup>10</sup>8 1/2, Fellini has insisted, should be understood as "a film of liberation--nothing more" (Murray, p. 155). In a sense, it is the ways of the flesh which are liberated by it.

<sup>11</sup>Zanelli, p. 168. This is the speech as it appears in the published screenplay. Although the one delivered in the film differs from it, they are substantially the same.

<sup>12</sup>It is interesting to note that in the screenplay (Zanelli, p. 264) Oenothea refers to Encolpio as "My child . . . incestuous" as she takes him in her arms. In Robinson Jeffers' sense of the word, Encolpio is incestuous in his flight from the elemental, for as Jeffers bitterly observed, man commits incest in his excessive preoccupation with the human and his neglect of the earth.

<sup>13</sup> For a fuller exploration of the role of the seasons in relation to the elemental, see Chapter Four.

<sup>14</sup> Fellini has also described a dream which reveals much about his relationship with the sea. In the dream Fellini was a giant who attempts to swim across it. He questions himself: "I may be a giant, but the sea's still the sea. Suppose I don't make it?" Succeeding in his venture, however, Fellini found the dream "sustaining," restoring his confidence in the sea (Strich, p. 5).

<sup>15</sup> La Dolce Vita, Trans. Oscar De Liso and Bernard Shir-Cliff (New York: Ballantine Books, 1961), p. 79. All future references to this work will be cited in the text.

<sup>16</sup> For Stevens, as I showed in Chapter One, the wind is also that which makes "iris frettings on the blank."

<sup>17</sup> In The Psychoanalysis of Fire (Boston: Beacon Press, 1938), Gaston Bachelard discusses the "dialectical" interplay between these two phenomena, showing how, for example, the "calorism" of Novalis is "sublimated into an illuminated vision." "In an infinite space," writes Bachelard, "light . . . does nothing. It awaits the eye." And when it reaches earth, where things are separate, it turns to fire in order to produce unity (pp. 106-107).

<sup>18</sup> In Roma, little respect is shown for the earth's "self-secluding" nature; in the Metro-Roma sequence, the giant mole rips and tears the earth savagely, but it appears that the earth is winning, for it has taken the builders one hundred years, we are informed, to make the progress which is shown and the earth, with its underground rivers, etc., continues to undermine their efforts.

<sup>19</sup> In his love of the grotesque, isn't Fellini a fairly atypical Italian? Certainly Italian visual art has, for the most part, shunned the grotesque and pursued instead perfect form and beauty. Fellini is really more Northern European in his outlook; Brueghel and Bosch are his forerunners.

<sup>20</sup> Two notable exceptions to this are Harvey Cox, who sees Fellini's grotesques as the establishment of a Buberian "thou" with the world ("The Purpose of the Grotesque in Fellini's Films, pp. 95, 99), and Carl Skrade, who considers Fellini's grotesque to be "numinous" and argues that "the grotesque is more beautiful than ugly, more fascinating than fearful"; see God and the Grotesque (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), p. 114.

<sup>21</sup> The Grotesque in Art and Literature (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963), p. 186.

<sup>22</sup> Fellini is himself the patron of the grotesques of Rome. They flock to him when he is making a movie, hoping to be used by him. See Harvey Cox's depiction of the set of Fellini-Satyricon, pp. 92-101.

<sup>23</sup> The expression "gnarled apples" is Sherwood Anderson's (Winesburg, Ohio); the first chapter of Anderson's book is called "The Book of the Grotesque" and Anderson observes that these grotesques, these "gnarled apples," sometimes are the very sweetest of all, despite their deformity.

<sup>24</sup> For example, G. W. F. Hegel, in his mammoth Philosophy of Fine Art, 4 vols. (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1920) seems to understand that what Western thought presumes to be grotesque in the art of the Far East is not really grotesque to them, but he cannot seem to grasp what this insight could suggest for the aesthetics of the West.

<sup>25</sup> Mary Cass Canfield, Grotesques and Other Reflections on Art and the Theatre (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1927), pp. 9-10.

<sup>26</sup> The Cinema of Federico Fellini (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1976), p. 37.

<sup>27</sup> Canfield, p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> Fellini's camera-eye singles out for inspection the same kind of grotesque figures as does the camera-eye of the American photographer Diane Arbus. But a comparison of their use of the grotesque as a contrary aesthetic form would be most revealing, not only about them, but about the whole question of illusion and reality. Arbus has written that "I always thought of photography as a naughty thing to do--that was one of my favorite things about it, . . . and when I first did it I felt very perverse"; quoted in Susan Sontag, On Photography (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1977), pp. 12-13; and claimed that "When you see someone on the street, . . . essentially what you notice about them is the flaw" (Sontag, p. 34). Unlike Fellini then, Arbus always was able to "insinuate anguish, kinkiness, mental illness with any subject" (Sontag, p. 34), and thus her photography would seem to be still under the sway of idealism, despite her love for the grotesque. See Sontag's excellent analysis of Arbus' work on pp. 31-48.

<sup>29</sup> See Expanded Cinema (New York: Dutton, 1970), p. 6. Entertainment gives to us what we want, Youngblood explains, while art gives to us what we did not know we needed.

<sup>30</sup> Dillard, pp. 142-43. Pilgrim at Tinker Creek should be viewed, I think, as an investigation into what is usually called the "natural grotesque."

<sup>31</sup> Among the many writers on the grotesque, G. K. Chesterton seems to have most fully realized this. He identified the grotesque with energy and found the instinct for "caricature" from which the grotesque springs in nature herself. No one who lives close to nature is likely to be upset by nature; grotesque as a term connoting horror, Chesterton insists, is a product of "Claude-glass" approaches to art; Robert Browning (New York: Macmillan, 1914), pp. 149-51.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Arthur Clayborough, The Grotesque in English Literature (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 3.

<sup>33</sup> Dillard, p. 3. John Ruskin seems also to have understood this. He wrote:

The reader is always to keep in mind that if the objects of horror, in which the terrible grotesque finds its materials, were contemplated in their true light, and with the entire energy of the soul, they would cease to be grotesque, and become altogether sublime. (Quoted in Clayborough, p. 48)

<sup>34</sup> Theory of Film: Character and Growth of a New Art (New York: Dover, 1952), p. 35.

<sup>35</sup> Quoted in John Berger, Ways of Seeing (New York: Viking Press, 1972), p. 17. This work is also an excellent source on the overthrow of single perspective in modern art.

<sup>36</sup> Rabelais and His World (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968), p. 319. All future references to this work will be cited in the text.

<sup>37</sup> The imposition of the bodily canon had catastrophic results according to Bakhtin. Human folklore prior to the Renaissance had struggled to "develop true human fearlessness," presenting against the "cosmic horror" not any abstract hope but rather "the material principle in man himself," in which all the elements are combined. By extolling the body's at-homeness in the world, folklore banished terror, for it knew that "the individual is only one moment in the triumphant life of the people and of mankind, a moment indispensable for their renewal and improvement" (pp. 335-36, 341). For more on this "fearlessness" in relation to the cinematic imagination, see Chapter Four.

<sup>38</sup> See "The Imagination of Skin: Some Observations on the Movies as Striptease," unpublished manuscript.

<sup>39</sup> Fellini's psychoanalytic critics (see, for example, David Herman, "Federico Fellini," American Imago, Fall, 1969, pp. 251-268) would of course see Fellini's scatological preoccupations as signs of anal fixation, but such a view seems entirely ludicrous in light of Bakhtin's theory of the function of the grotesque.

<sup>40</sup> In the bowels, genitals, mouth, and anus, Bakhtin writes, "the confines between bodies and between the body and the world are overcome; there is an interchange and an interorientation" (p. 317). Consequently, urine, dung, and all excremental products are for Bakhtin "gay matter" which transforms fear into laughter (p. 335).

<sup>41</sup> Dillard, p. 64. The quotation from Van Gogh can be found on p. 71 of Dillard.

<sup>42</sup> Dillard, p. 221.

<sup>43</sup> Madness and Civilization (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), pp. 3-38.

<sup>44</sup> For example: "It's quite possible that if the cinema had not existed, if I had not met Rossellini, and if the circus was still an up-



to-date form of entertainment, I'd have very much liked to be the director of a big circus . . ." (Budgeon, p. 90).

<sup>45</sup>See "Whom Do You Most Admire?" in Strich, pp. 142-49.

<sup>46</sup>The Ascent of Man (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), p. 249. Relativity theory and quantum physics have thus brought about a rejuvenation of a participatory theory of reality. See below.

<sup>47</sup>"Profile: Federico Fellini," New Yorker, 41 (30 Oct. 1965), p. 74.

<sup>48</sup>Ted Perry has characterized Guido acutely as a "person who assimilates and identifies spectacle (the film he is making, planning, thinking about, has made) and life. . . . For Guido, the distinction between what his imagination creates and the rest of experience is often meaningless. For him, everything is imagined, in the sense that his imagination is the constitutive power that creates his world"; Filmguide to 8 1/2 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), p. 57.

<sup>49</sup>See Owen Barfield, Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich, 1971). Barfield sees man as the "theatre on which participation has died to rise again" (p. 185). That the "real" world is the product of participation is also the prevailing view of modern science. The physicist John Wheeler, for example, has written that

Nothing is more important about the quantum principle than this, that it destroys the concept of the world as "sitting out there," with the observer safely separated from it by a 20 centimeter slab of plate glass. Even to observe so minuscule an object as an electron, he must shatter the glass. He must reach in. . . . one has to cross out that old word "observer" and put in its place the new word "participator." In some strange sense the universe is a participatory universe. (Quoted in Fritjof Capra, The Tao of Physics (Berkeley: Shambhala Press, 1975), p. 141)

<sup>50</sup>Daumier's entire speech is as follows:

We are stifled by words, images, sounds--none of which has any right to exist! One must educate oneself to silence. . . . Guido my friend--silence, emptiness, nothingness are so beautiful, so pure! If one cannot have everything, then the only real perfection is nothingness.

<sup>51</sup>Bachelard, The Poetics of Space (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), p. 220.

<sup>52</sup>Quoted in Perry, p. 114.

<sup>53</sup>Rilke uses the prodigal son story in a very similar way in the closing chapter of The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge, Trans. M. D. Herter Norton (New York: W. W. Norton, 1949).

<sup>54</sup>Bachelard, p. 222.



<sup>55</sup> Ingmar Bergman, Face to Face, Trans. Alan Blair (New York: Pantheon, 1976), p. 105.

<sup>56</sup> Other prominent uses of the face-to-face might be listed: In Bergman's Hour of the Wolf, Liv Ullman faces the camera in direct address at the beginning of the film; in Annie Hall, the camera serves as Alvy Singer's confidant (at one point Singer even turns to the camera to confirm the reality of events which have taken place before it); and in 2001: A Space Odyssey, in one of its most memorable uses, the star-child turns slowly to meet the camera face-to-face in the very last image, after having come previously face-to-face with the earth itself.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### JULIET OF THE SPIRITS: FROM LOVE TO AUTOCHTHONY

If fire is lighted in water  
How is it to be extinguished?  
If the fear comes from the protector  
Who is there to protect you from this fear?

Nagarjuna

Why should she give her bounty to the dead?  
What is divinity if it can come  
Only in silent shadows and in dreams?  
Shall she not find in comforts of the sun,  
In pungent fruit and bright, green wings, or else  
In any balm or beauty of the earth,  
Things to be cherished like the thought of heaven?  
Divinity must live within herself:  
Passions of rain, or moods in falling snow;  
Grievings in loneliness, or unsubdued  
Elations when the forest blooms; gusty  
Emotions on wet roads on autumn nights;  
All pleasures and all pains, remembering  
The bough of summer and the winter branch.  
These are the measures destined for her soul.

Wallace Stevens, "Sunday Morning"

In 8 1/2, during Guido's late night visit to his production office, he encounters two young girls, the nieces of Agostini, who, in addition to bouncing about playfully on the bed, bring against him a devastating accusation: they claim that Guido is incapable of making a love story, and Guido concurs without even debating the point. In a later scene Claudia levels a similar charge against Guido. It is an indictment which Fellini's critics have leveled against him too. Eric Rhode, for example, has echoed Guido's young critics, calling Fellini's depiction of love "completely sexless" and lamenting his "clearly neurotic reluctance to

handle adult themes."<sup>1</sup> To be unable to make a love story would seem a grievous failing in an artist in the tradition of the West, dominated as it is in its drama, poetry, fiction, cinema, and all popular arts by the theme of love. I argued in Chapter Two that the potency and emotional power of Fellini's creations are a result of his persistent refusal to fail, his ability to avoid all the traps which, according to Beckett, Poulet, and Blanchot, await each and every artist. But is not the love story Fellini's Achilles heel?

A quick survey of Fellini's work reveals nothing to exonerate him from the charge: Ivan and Wanda's marriage in The White Sheik nearly disintegrates on the first day; Gelsomina's power to love is destroyed by Zampano's brutality; Oscar dupes and then betrays Cabiria for money, all in the name of love and marriage; and as Frank Burke has shown, La Dolce Vita is one extended voyage to annulment, as Marcello breaks his marriage with all Western conventions, including love. In 8 1/2 likewise, love relationships produce only turmoil and discord. And in later films, the theme hardly even appears; think, for example, of the absence of heterosexual love in Fellini-Satyricon. With Juliet of the Spirits, however, a radical new step is taken in the evolution of Fellini's imagination, an imaginative quantum leap which illuminates retrospectively the failures of love in Fellini's earlier films, showing them to be narrative "try-works" for an evolution beyond the love story in Juliet.

Juliet of the Spirits was, of course, Fellini's first color film, so it is not surprising that Fellini has insisted that up until the time of its making he always had to hold himself back (Budgeon, p. 95). But the film is pivotal in another sense as well.<sup>2</sup> Fellini has told of a dream he had before the filming of Juliet of the Spirits in which

someone took out his right eye painlessly with a spoon as Fellini looked on in surprise. Fellini speculated that it could have indicated that he no longer needed his right eye, supposedly the eye of reality in Italian folklore, or that it was an omen of a bad ending for him, that he had become too narrow and one-sided (Kezich, p. 29). (Perhaps the majority of Fellini's critics would agree with the latter interpretation, since the standard critical assessment of Fellini is that Juliet of the Spirits marks the beginning of his decline as an artist.<sup>3)</sup> But this dream definitely suggests that the making of the film was in some way a turning point for him.

I have previously called the narrative structure Juliet exemplifies Outside, meaning that it focuses on that stage in human individuation in which a mountain is not a mountain, where the wild contents of the flesh, newly rejuvenated and unglossed, so overpower perception and imagination that the world seems eclipsed and the body itself is threatened with extinction, not as in the Inside stage by excessive abstraction, but by the mind's ecstatic, mad attempt to achieve unification with the powers and energies of the flesh, experienced for the first time. As I have shown, 8 1/2 first unleashed these powers in Fellini's imagination, but it is with Juliet of the Spirits that the possibilities and direction of the Outside narrative are first fully explored. It is, after all, ostensibly an attempt at a love story, and in the Western tradition the love story has been the Outside narrative par excellence. Fellini once referred to Juliet as an "extrasensorial tale" (Murray, p. 156), and so, in a sense, it is, as most love stories are; they are almost literally unearthly. But despite its Outsideness, Juliet of the Spirits imaginatively points toward an orientation to the flesh which is anything but alien or unearthly. To understand the kind of tale that

it is and the nature of the forces that are at work in its mimicry, let us return to Fellini's dream.

Fellini speculated that the loss of his right eye, his "eye of reality," meant that he no longer needed it. That the right eye is the eye of "reality" has more than just folklore to substantiate it. Since the body is cross-wired, the right eye, as is now known, is under the hegemony of the left brain, the seat of man's rational, language-oriented functions, while the left eye, of imagination, is the seer of the right, holistic, non-verbal hemisphere.<sup>4</sup> The implications of Fellini's dream, if taken literally, are therefore fascinating. The loss of the right eye would entail, at least metaphorically, the rejection of abstraction and the ability to gloss perceptions; Heidegger's "ought" would disappear. And with the rational powers gone, the perceiver would be forced to rely on the imaginative, holistic orientation to the world's unglossed flesh which the left eye supplies. With the left eye paramount, human experience would be wholly of the earth's Saying, for the more than rational distortion would be present in virtually everything. Such a vision would seem, at this stage of human evolution, totally Outside and horrifying beyond belief. It would need to be tamed to be endured.

But it would reveal as well the presence of the messenger of that hermetic realm, the angel of Rilke, Stevens, Williams, and Fellini. With Juliet of the Spirits Fellini's imagination comes to trust in the hintings of this angel. He heeds its Saying in a way he never could before, making for the first time a complete Journey Out and Back in a single film, taming Outsideness and turning it into the Open. The loss of the right eye of reality is then no loss. Without it, the ideal can no longer hold sway over his imagination, and it can come to feel no need

and cinematically create its image. Yeats in "The Circus Animal's Desertion" described his own rejection of the ideal as the loss of a ladder, the equivalent of Fellini's loss of the right eye, and foresaw its aftermath:

Now that my ladder's gone,  
I must lie down where all the ladders start,  
In the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart.<sup>5</sup>

Juliet of the Spirits is the commencement of this lying down in Fellini's imagination.

With Juliet of the Spirits a new force emerges which will ultimately overthrow Outsideness and show the way to the Open: feminine access to the ways of the flesh. "This try for freedom," as Fellini termed the movie to Pierre Kast (p. 182), becomes necessarily something more than a love story, for the traditional love story, of the complete merger with another, or, as is more common, of the tragedy resulting from the failure to do so, Fellini cannot and will not make. He refers on one occasion to the merger and total obedience of two people to one another as an "irreligious thought" (Budgeon, p. 67), and he seems to see it, particularly in the films which follow La Strada, as incompatible with his imagination and, as I will presently show, as a primary perpetuating force of the oblivion of Being. Like Rilke, Fellini doubts the efficacy of merging with another being because "a union . . . of something unclarified and unfinished, still subordinate . . ." would be an abomination. Consequently, Juliet of the Spirits illustrates a dedication to a fuller meaning of love which would replace the old one of merger: it is "a high inducement to the individual to ripen, to become something in himself, to become world himself for another's sake."<sup>6</sup> Juliet of the Spirits does not itself show this kind of love, nor has Fellini yet shown it: it appears in his own love for the

cinema, but has not yet been a dramatic element in any of his films, and thus in a sense his critics are right: he has never made a love story. But no one, to my knowledge, has yet made the love story Fellini prepares the way for in Juliet of the Spirits by his liberation of the female, her release into the Open. For it would be the story which is on the other side of the discovery that there is nothing to discover.

Giulietta Masina, Fellini's wife, who plays Juliet, becomes the beneficiary of this gift of the imagination. Fellini has always insisted that it is she who has enabled his imagination "to run wild in a very fruitful way" (Budgeon, p. 95). He understands, as an admirer of Jung should (see "Whom Do You Most Admire?" in Strich, p. 147), that she is the other half of his being, his anima, and he has explained, in reference to Giulietta's effect on his art, that a "man can't become whole or free until he has set woman free--his woman" (Playboy, p. 62). Juliet of the Spirits can then be viewed as well as Fellini's attempt to set Giulietta free in his own imagination and, thereby, to set his imagination itself free.

Concerning Giulietta, Fellini has stated:

She has taken me over a certain threshold, through a certain gate, and made me penetrate into a landscape, into a territory that I have not yet described thoroughly and completely, but that I hope very much, if fancy leads me to it again, to be able to translate into images. (Budgeon, pp. 8-9)

Fellini's prescience is apparent here. The movies which follow Juliet are, in fact, the more complete description of that territory which is of course the Open. But it is with Juliet that Fellini first links up his imagination to a source more conducive to its sustenance and fulfillment than love, the flesh itself, and as a result Fellini's imagination gives birth to not only what Rilke has called a woman "whose name will no longer signify merely an opposite of the masculine,

but something in itself, something that makes one think not of any complement and limit, but only of life and existence, the feminine human being"<sup>7</sup> (my italics), but his first real attainment of imaginative autochthony as well.

The morning after her attempt at a romantic fifteenth anniversary celebration, Juliet escorts her young nieces to the beach. The night before, at a seance conducted by the medium Genius, her dormant powers of imagination were reawakened. That Juliet has a history of mystic acumen is evident not only from Elizabetta's concerned remark of the night before ("I don't like it when she does these things. I'm scared"),<sup>8</sup> but also from Genius' prior knowledge of her "gift" ("My dear lady, I know everything about you"), and from Valentina and Genius' apparent plotting to involve Juliet in a seance.

At the beach, against the protestation of the skeptical, positivist doctor, Juliet explains that she has always had such powers, even as a child:

All I had to do was close my eyes and I would see . . . castles, piazzas at night, forests, tiny faces. They frightened me, but it was all very beautiful. They continued for years, and then, suddenly, they stopped. . . . But it was enough just to shut my eyes. . . . (p. 199)<sup>9</sup>

And true to form, when she closes her eyes her visions return. An old man, identical with the detective Lynx-Eyes, brings to Juliet the end of a long rope attached to some heavy burden that is to be pulled, and he yields the rope to her saying, "Juliet, will you help me please? I'm old, and besides, this is really your concern" (my italics).

But what is the nature of this "concern," a word which to Martin Heidegger signifies the very nature of man himself as Dasein, his prime



existentiale, man being the only creature for whom being is itself an issue and, therefore, the only one who needs to care about himself and his authenticity and about his world and its value? Juliet begins to pull ashore a strange ship, loaded with wild, yet dissipated men (imaginative extensions of the "Olaf" of the seance?). It becomes a landing barge, and Juliet turns to run away.<sup>10</sup> Slowed by the deep sand, she moves only in a painfully slow, ritualistic motion. She calls out to the Doctor who sits peacefully unconcerned in the distance, but he will not help. Like Brecht's Mother Courage, who cannot rid herself of the living burden of her wagon, her history and her story, and must, consequently, pull it with her everywhere, Juliet for the remainder of her story cannot surrender the burden posed by the contents of this ship: it is her concern.

The occupants of this water-born vehicle of her psyche are stricken with some "unknown malady" (p. 204), but that malady is only Juliet's neglect. For they are the Wild Being of Juliet's imagination, the visionary images of an earlier time which have since ceased to fire her perception due to its growing obsession with the objective and the rational. Appropriately enough, they are cinematically born out of a white-out generated by Juliet's white hat which fills the screen as her head sinks into sleep. They were once alive for her in a happier time, as we are shown in Juliet's memory of her visit to the circus with her grandfather. They are the wild African dancers who move ecstatically toward the camera away from the gaze of the young Juliet. But on the beach this morning after her dream of marriage has begun to evaporate before her very eyes, she recognizes her betrayal of Wild Being and the flesh and her own concerned self-development in favor of a domesticity far removed from true serenity. True to the nature

of the discovery that there is nothing to discover, this epiphany generates in her a search for true Being, but the path is complex. From here on, even the "characters" of Juliet's world flash signs of the more than rational distortion; they become, following the lead of the spirit Iris and of the world of color in which Juliet moves, iridescent in their very being. She begins to heed the pedagogical gestures of their flesh; the world Says to her what she needs to perceive. Her education (literally "leading out") is under way.

When Juliet later visits Bhisma, she even observes a demonstration lesson of the "first there is a mountain" parable. An apple is shown to the audience and Bhisma's assistant inquires as to what it might be. Juliet reveals the stage of her development by her answer. She asks of Valentina simply, "Isn't that an apple?" All around her, this common sense view is doubted by the "culture-vultures"<sup>11</sup> who have come with their hair still in curlers to be enlightened, although they apparently are so mired in abstraction, so in love with the idea of enlightenment, so lost in the oblivion of Being, that any real satori seems impossible. One explains that the apple is really both the apple and the Buddha, and the assistant identifies this perception as belonging to the third state. Juliet, however, has not even glimpsed this stage, as Valentina informs her, because she has not yet seen "beyond material form." Hers is the perception of the first stage: an apple is still just an apple. She has yet to take the Journey Out and Back which is essential to her metamorphosis. She must still pass through the second stage, beyond material form, and this she will do with the aid of her angelic spirits.

Juliet tacitly knows all this. She revealingly relates to her nieces the story of the labyrinth:

and among all these trials, there was also the one in the labyrinth--the hardest of them all. A labyrinth is a huge place where, if someone enters, it is impossible to find the way out. The more one wanders around, the worse it gets. . . . Well, Seven-in-One-Blow, who was not even afraid of the Devil, said, "I'm going to enter the labyrinth". . . . And he crossed the woods, which were full of golden apples. There were so many golden apples and they were so shiny that even at night the woods were lit up. (p. 273-74)

This unusual telling of the story includes no Minotaur, no Theseus, no Ariadne; it is an eclectic hodge-podge of fairy tale and myth, of the traditional story with the eleventh labor of Hercules and Grimm's fairy tale "The Valiant Little Tailor." In fact, it is not so much a telling of the tale as a Saying which lies behind the images of the movie, framing, shaping, and even coloring them.

This Saying is a verbal counterpoint which serves as something like the movie's inner voice, a voice which breaks through repeatedly in all of Fellini's films. Although it would seem at first perception to be tangential, even added on and superfluous, this Saying springs from the same source as all of Juliet's own voices; the same voice tells this tale of the labyrinth in such a way as to facilitate Juliet's own story and speaks, for example, through the mysterious images on the television set in Juliet's house. It is this same voice which announces itself finally as "true friends." It is the Saying of Fellini's imagination, and there is, therefore, no polarity of words and images in the film: words and images are both Sayings. Just as in so many primitive creation myths, including Christianity (see John I: 1-18), the word and the light are interfused.

This labyrinth is a figure for the oblivion of Being as I have explained it, a maze of objects, plans, purposes, causes and effects, separated from Being's sustaining power. Into this labyrinth Juliet is pushed by her spirits; she is the Seven-in-One-Blow she speaks of. Like the fairy tale hero, she is at first shy, private, and undemanding: like him too her victory is a small one. To conquer the more than rational distortion, that is, to set it to work as a forever present heuristic influence within the ways of the flesh, is child's play; an infinitesimal change will secure it, an expenditure of energy quantitatively not much greater than swatting a fly, but qualitatively so distinct, in the movement of eye and refinement of sense which it produces, that it transforms the world. All that is required is to heed the Saying of the angel.

Thus Juliet emerges in the end feeling for the first time her powers of Being intact. Her Journey Out and Back is illuminated, as in her tale, by the golden apples, her spirits, her angels. Although at Bhisma's she could see an apple only prosaically, she comes to see multiple identity in all things, to turn red apples into golden ones, and to grow beyond the need for the false golden apples--house, home security, husband--with which Giorgio, her Hippomenes, trapped her Atalantian powers of the spirit--swiftness of eyes and grace of imagination--into a false marriage. She comes to see devils as angels, to realize the wisdom Nagarjuna has implied by his question:

If the fear comes from the protector  
Who is there to protect you from this fear?<sup>12</sup>

All and everyone protect her; her suffering, she understand by the movie's end, has been truly a felix culpa. Nothing need be feared anymore, as she declares in her final test of strength. To her tyrannical mother's

order not to open the secret door her answer is simply, "You don't frighten me anymore." Able at last to be that which she already is, she discovers that there is nothing to discover.

Appropriately, no sooner has she begun to discover the flesh again, to bring it ashore from the formless ocean to the earth where it might best fulfill its function, than while crossing the woods returning from the beach, her way is illuminated by the golden apples of the call of a bird, to which she responds as if it were magic, perplexed by this intimation of Saying, which will grow to become, at the movie's end, not something perplexing, but the very texture of everydayness, indistinguishable from her home, the trees, the very world in which she lives, to her autochthonous imagination. What else can the unbelievable power, grace, and beauty of the downturned mouth, shy smile, and out of the corner glance of the eyes of Giulietta Masina (seen throughout La Strada and Nights of Cabiria, particularly in its closing image, and in Juliet of the Spirits at the appearance of any astonishing thing) image but this? It is the gesture of one within the flesh acknowledging its source, its unbearably joyous, face-to-face thanks for its own angelic gestures of aid in the struggle toward releasement.

That even Juliet, who "sees obscure, magical things everywhere," has lost contact with an angelic experience of the flesh is due in part to the extreme oblivion of Being in which many of the spirits of her world dwell. Juliet's friend Valentina is one such individual. Her oblivion, unlike that of the Doctor or Lynx-Eyes, is due not to any will on her part, but to carelessness. She is so ultra-civilized and chic, so involved in the whirl of society and in all fads (she is able, after all, to verbally explain Bhisma's esoteric teachings), that the

mysteries of everydayness have become alien to her and she must ask of Juliet, "This is dew, isn't it?"

The doctor at the beach provides a different example. His totally prosaic scientific explanations for all of the promptings of Wild Being which emerge in Juliet represent a willful desire not to rediscover his loss. He attributes her visions to electrical interference, bad digestion, and failing to make love often enough, and in the poverty of his cynicism he cannot even see that his explanation that Juliet's visions have their source in the "whims of unknown substances," which is intended as a scientific explanation, might just as easily be taken as another name for the more than rational distortion. (To explain the cause of a phenomenon, as Heidegger and other phenomenologists have shown, is not necessarily to take away its mystery. The attempt by much of modern science to profane "the Numinous" is not always successful; it has often introduced even greater mystery.)

Lynx-Eyes, the detective Juliet hires to investigate Giorgio, is no less a progenitor of the total expropriation of nature which lies at the heart of the oblivion of Being. With his insistence that Juliet find out the truth, his faith that "telephoto lenses . . . make intimacy and secrecy outdated concepts," he stands as a spokesman for modern technological man. But he possesses as well a special knowledge which allows him to see beyond his own professional sympathies. He insists over and over to Juliet that all may still be well, despite the catastrophic situation she believes herself to be in. He warns her that she will be presented "with an image of your husband that you have never known about. You'll participate in his most secret hours; you'll penetrate those shadowy portions of his life which otherwise you would never enter" (this last sentence, incidentally, could well be used as

a description of the viewer's role in watching a movie like Juliet). He is proud of his ability to make Being disclose itself and its secrets, to overpower the seeming, the dissembling, appearance of the ordinary with his technology, and this pride is identical to that which has powered man's whole conquest of nature, his relentless unearthing of the secrecy and depth Being so badly needs to have existence perceptually. But Lynx-Eyes suggests as well that Juliet let things be, and he explains to her that "Ours is an objective point of view, and therefore limited. Reality at times may be quite different, more innocent," as Juliet herself discovers as she emerges from her house at the movie's close. Lynx-Eyes' great wisdom consists in this: he views the oblivion of Being he participates in as essential; he perceives tacitly that Juliet's loss will be her gain, an understanding which on the historical level manifests itself in Heidegger's strange optimism that only the oblivion of Being could ever make any real perception of Being possible (see above, p. 25). And with the enemy removed, the Maginot Lines torn down, Juliet's spirits, Lynx-Eyes included, can become "true friends."

But all these characters and their ilk could not prevent a man or woman from achieving true releasement into the Open if it were not for a larger and more powerful force alive in the world, an illusion so vast and domineering that it brings those under its sway to seek, in the words of Denis de Rougemont, a "transcendental state outside ordinary human experience, . . . an ineffable absolute irreconcilable with the world, but that they feel to be more real than the world":<sup>13</sup> romantic love. The problem of love is the true center of Juliet of the Spirits and the axis of the whole problem of Being.

Juliet of the Spirits, after all, opens with an anniversary dinner with which Juliet hopes to surprise Giorgio. Although her dream of romance fails to materialize, except for Giorgio's obviously false gesture of dancing Juliet into the living room (caught in an ironic tracking shot and accompanied by sentimental music), the seance later on again ushers in the theme and from then on it never leaves center screen. Iris brings a message which reads quite simply, "Love for everyone." And Juliet repeats this message the next morning while looking out her window. She has just scolded Teresina for flirting with a man over the back fence, and she says it to herself as a reminder to be tolerant; everyone, after all, seeks love as an ultimate value and she must be understanding of her maid who seeks only what Juliet herself wants in order to attain fulfillment: to be loved, permanently and faithfully. Even Gasperino, the gardener, who as he emerges from the pool looks like a great sea beast, a cousin perhaps of the fish at the end of La Dolce Vita and the whale of Fellini-Satyricon, thinks mainly of love and sings, "I'll fly, I'll fly to the arms of my beautiful love. . . ." La Rochefoucault once remarked that few would fall in love if they had not heard of love. Clearly, everyone in Juliet of the Spirits has heard of it. Fellini once remarked, when asked if he was a Catholic, that if you grow up in the water, you are a fish; if you grow up in Italy you are a Catholic. He might have gone further still; if you grow up in the Western world, you hope to fall in love. Juliet explains her understanding of the myth of marital bliss to an uncomprehending Suzy, and her version coincides with the ordinary marriage story:

I always thought that marriage should be like this: I should be all for him and he all for me. I'm almost ashamed to



admit it, but Giorgio was my first love. As soon as I saw him I fell in love and didn't want anything but to live with him . . . He became my whole world--my husband, my lover, my father, my friend, my house. I didn't need anything else. I thought I was happy. . . . (p. 271)

In Love and the Western World, Denis de Rougemont has masterfully explained the sources and historical effects of the development of this kind of romantic love. His diagnosis is sobering.

Love--romantic, erotic love as we know it--the result of a cultural mixture of certain elements of eastern religions with Christian agape, has had one dominant result: it has forced those under its sway "out of the world." Its "limitless aspiration" (p. 60) has resulted not only in individual cases of maladjustment to everyday experience (such as those of Arlette and Laura in Juliet of the Spirits and the heroes and heroines of most great love stories from Tristan and Iseult to Erich Segal's Love Story), but may perhaps be, as de Rougemont suggests, the true source of the Faustian passion of Western thought as well. In de Rougemont's analysis, romantic love has always been the most powerful force militating against autochthony within the world and the flesh. It operates against the "biological ends" of man, destroying the "diastole and systole of attraction," thereby producing "a never lapsing desire to embrace the All" through the medium of the loved one (pp. 60, 62). As a power working toward the unity of the self, it has always been self-contradictory, as de Rougemont observes:

Eros is complete Desire, luminous Aspiration, the primitive religious soaring carried to its loftiest pitch to the extreme exigency of purity, which is also the extreme exigency of Unity. But absolute unity must be the negation of the present human being in his suffering multiplicity. (p. 61)

The need for love thus presumes the insufficiency of the self, of one's own being, and romantic love assumes that this need can be filled through union with another human being, presumably similarly insufficient. It

is therefore a death wish, as de Rougemont and others have argued (and as the example of the suicide of her schoolmate Laura makes apparent to Juliet<sup>14</sup>).

Perhaps worst of all the underlying Platonism of love in the Western world has distorted our perception of the world, for it brought with it the "error of supposing that love is first and foremost a matter of physical beauty" and failed to acknowledge that the lover can bestow the beauty. The search for love is then inextricably bound up in man's predilection for the "ought," for in its search for perfection it finds all individuality wanting; and it is a prime generative source of the perception of beings as grotesque. As de Rougemont has observed:

the degenerate Platonism by which we are obsessed blinds us to the reality of the object as it is according to its own truth--or else renders it little likeable. And it sends us in pursuit of chimeras that exist only inside ourselves. (p. 74)

Romantic love, then, makes the "thorny beauty of the real" almost impossible to see.

As a remedy for this "unitive mysticism" of eros (p. 153) which has formed the image of love for the West, de Rougemont offers an "epithalamian mysticism" of agape, which does not flee the world but accepts instead that "We are unendingly and incessantly in the thick of the struggle between nature and grace; unendingly and incessantly unhappy and then happy" (p. 323). De Rougemont's realism is based on a solid biological understanding. Romantic love, the common conception of marriage as "they lived happily ever after," is evolutionarily absurd:

Nature is said to have required several hundreds of thousands of years for the selection of those species which now seem to us adapted to their surroundings. And yet we have the presumption to suppose that all of a sudden in the course of a single life we may solve the problem of the adaptation to one another of two highly organized physical and moral beings! (p. 303)

With this insight, de Rougemont shifts the problem of love to the arena

where it belongs and in which its true biological and psychological function can be ascertained: man's adaptation to his world. Love is a question of perception, a problem of our mimicry.

In the essay "Primal Sound," Rilke argues precisely this point; man seeks always the Open; he longs to be able to move in that pure space into which flowers so trustingly unfold. And love is an instrument of his seeking. The lover, Rilke says, surrenders his individuality and even his existence in space in order to stand precariously at the very center of sense. He has overcome his fear of the unknown, those regions between and around our infinitesimal sensory awareness of the world, of Being itself, through his ultimate faith in the beloved. Wagering all on the object of his love, his medium, his experience of unity has no real permanence. He tries to redeem Being by redeeming a being. The wish of the lover for the beloved is, according to Augustine, "I wish you to be." There is no more beautiful hope, no higher value, but when this effort to let be is undertaken at the jeopardy of the being of the lover, as in romantic love's virtual desire for death, it becomes the negation of all value. What began as an extension of sensual experience becomes in actuality the very opposite. The lover finds himself lost in the realm of Outsideness.

But the poet, says Rilke, surpasses the lover and brings value back into Being itself by pushing the senses to their fullest, not by seeking to possess what he loves, but by a "lively delight" passing through "the five gardens [of sense] in one leap."<sup>15</sup> It is by a poetic act then, not by an act of love, that Being returns as an element of perception. The poet comes back to the world by going outside of it in search of the extension of the fields of sense, to heed its Saying, and by so doing he redeems it, that is, he makes it shine with its own

truth, in its own flesh, its own iridescence, so fully that it no longer appears an object for manipulation: he says to the world, instead of merely to the beloved, "I wish you to be." His fervent desire is for mimicry of the earth and its ways and not merely merger with a single other. He seeks autochthony in his world and comes to see love in the Western world as a virtual placebo cure for man's alienation from Being and the flesh. He questions, as Rilke does in the Duino Elegies,

Ought not these oldest sufferings of ours to be yielding  
more fruit by now? Is it not time that, in loving,  
we freed ourselves from the loved one, and, quivering, endured:  
as the arrow endures the string, to become, in the gathering out-leap  
something more than itself? (DE, p. 23)

Juliet is a poet such as Rilke envisioned, and her story is therefore much more than a love story.

While much of her world seems lost in the oblivion of Being, Juliet lives intimately close to all the beings and things of her world, as Jose notes almost instantaneously by inspecting the flowers in her garden:

You are lucky: flowers are grateful to those who care for them.  
It is obvious that these plants have received much love. If  
you can give so much love every day, your heart must be filled  
with love. (p. 236)

Truly flowers are grateful and do repay her. When later on at Susy's, Iris speaks to Juliet, suggesting that she heed her teacher, the voice comes from an ordinary iris on a table in Susy's bedroom. But is it a voice? Is it not rather a vision, an iridescence? If as Merleau-Ponty suggests even language and ideas are evidenced (literally, "from the visual") in perception itself, able to "appear directly in the infrastructure of vision" (VI, p. 145), certainly values too,

instructions on "How to Live, What to Do" (Stevens), must appear there too in the very Say-show nature of the gesturing image. The flowers of Juliet's world repay their gratitude for her love by their Saying. In the case of Juliet's experience of the more than rational distortion in Susy's bedroom, she comes as a result to heed the world of the body which Susy rules, and when she moves beyond it, to dwell in the more Open world of the flesh.

But it is not only Susy's iris which speaks to Juliet. Her world is angelic to the core. The elements, color, her memory, and her spirits all bring her messages. In this, Fellini's imagination seems guided by the same faith as Rilke in the first Duino elegy, who advises the woman of the poem to remember that:

the Springs had need of you. Many a star  
was waiting for you to espy it. Many a wave  
would rise on the past towards you; or else, perhaps  
as you went by an open window, a violin  
would be giving itself to someone. All this was a trust.  
(DE, p. 23)

As beneficiary of this faith, Juliet is truly the trustee of her world and its angels.

This Fellini faith is not original with Juliet of the Spirits, however; the magic of all of Fellini's imaginative quantum leaps springs from it: Cabiria's resurrection and the angelic parade which returns her to living; Guido's creative regeneration in 8 1/2; the rebirth of Fischietto and the magical apparition of Fru-fru and his partner at the end of The Clowns, all partake in the "affirmative acceptance of life" which Fellini has suggested constitutes true religion (see Chapter One). But mere acceptance of life will not bring the Open; the faceless, bodyless nuns preach acceptance as well, the acceptance of a religious martyrdom. The angel wings which they distribute are a sinister parody

of the real angelic. Evidently it is not life which need be accepted (the only way to avoid it with certainty after all is suicide, the alternative which Laura offers of "grey stillness and silence"). It is perception itself which must be accepted; it is the muscles of the eyes which must become resigned, accommodated, to the flesh. And this resignation is what I earlier called, after Stevens, the making of "iris frettings on the blank."

The way to this resignation begins with the very first image of the movie. As the camera moves toward Juliet's house, through the red and green of the trees, and finally up and over them, it reveals the essentials of the flesh, the element from which the Open is derived. The camera eye moves through a depth which does not seem to it a nothingness but rather the element through which it can most truly feel the inexhaustible richness of the visible through perception, what Merleau-Ponty calls "auscultation or palpation in depth" (VI, p. 122). What palpates through this image is the being of Juliet herself as she is discovered within her house. The camera heeds her image. And the color of the scene, the first color images of a major Fellini film, discloses yet another of the flesh's attributes: it is laden with imagination, clothed with our own gazes upon it, not the white light which is projected from the back of the auditorium, which would be the flesh truly naked and wild, but the flesh already partly disclosed, that is, partly lived, the result of the intertwining of our bodies with the visible.<sup>16</sup>

This image will metamorphose further until at the movie's end it contains the seer as well and, replacing the rectilinear house of the beginning, becomes itself the home. Dr. Miller had used these trees of her home, partakers of what Heidegger calls the "pure draft" of Being, as

examples to Juliet of how she might grow, calmly, silently, serenely. From the trees came the call of a bird which Juliet seemed to have understood. Into the trees, she ascended with Susy, closing her eyes against the dizziness as the camera sees what she at the moment cannot bear: their sheltering, luminous suffusion across the screen. Once at the top, she does, however, share with Susy her "personal sun" and her experience of it at its zenith, when no shadow is cast, a homologue for Fellini of Being itself (see Chapter Two). But at the end, her eyes resigned, she sees these trees as part of the flesh, the dehiscence of which includes her as well as she moves from left to right, duplicating the positive motion Genius had already detected in her, small in the depth of this long range camera shot. When Andre Bazin argued so strongly against montage effects and for photographing the depth of a scene instead, he hoped such cinematography would allow for greater imaginative possibility. This scene might be used appropriately as absolute confirmation of his faith in the ability of the visible to reveal its value without manipulation.

Fellini's original screenplay for the film describes perfectly what the scene Says so beautifully with absolutely no words:

Juliet is quiet, almost serene. . . . She looks around her at a world that more and more takes on--in ways so simple, so stable--both the real and the unreal pulse of everyday magic.

A flight of swallows passes high in the sky. Juliet raises her eyes and sees the swallows also slowly enter into the golden refraction of the sun's rays.

Juliet seems to be whispering something under her breath, but for the first time not in order to call or surprise anyone.

She seems at peace with this pure world, filled with marvellous realities, which spring to life around her.

She hears a cry from above--it could be the sound of a group of birds, or the call of the swallows.

She raises her eyes, shields them from the powerful sun with the back of her hand. She tries to puzzle out the meaning of this faintly heard sound.

But she sees only the very blue sky--a blue as deep as a marine abyss--and the golden rays of the sun.

Juliet smiles, bends her head . . . in the rustling of a light wind. It is as if she no longer cared about the origins of the sounds, the images she has seen, whether they be part of a natural mystery or part of a supernatural secret. Everything in her is now anchored in peaceful harmony, beyond the mystifying ghosts that have until now besieged her: she is concerned with the daily miracle of simple reality. Juliet smiles, liberated, at peace. (pp. 173-74; my italics)

Certainly there exists no more illuminating verbal Saying of Fellini's imagination than this, none that sheds more light on the Saying of his images.

The serenity imaged in this scene has been promised to Juliet throughout her story. Early in the film, the evening of the day at the beach, she is seen watching attentively a woman on television who demonstrates exercises for the development of the eyes. She concentrates on the horizontal plane and, therefore, on the seeing of this world, and Juliet listens carefully to her advice, correcting Teresina's refusal to take the exercises seriously by explaining, "No, you shouldn't move your head. Only your eyes." The message of this angel, not the last to appear from Juliet's television screen, concerns the flesh. By calling attention to the muscular coordination of her eyes, this most infinitesimal, tacit source of our orientation to the flesh's aseity, Juliet's television angel has thus performed for her an incalculable service: she has shown to Juliet that the way to the Open is not labyrinthine, but only a matter of visual precision.

Since Juliet heeds her well and stores her message in her eye-pouch, her promise that "These exercises will give back to your eyes the



splendor" is realized. Newly aroused and alert to all Saying, Juliet's eyes experience the splendor of the iridescence around her. Beyond all objectivity, she perceives the Being of her world and its inhabitants, securing from them all, Bhisma, Lynx-Eyes, Giorgio, Jose, her family, Dr. Miller, the elements, and her Grandfather the truth as aletheia she needs to see and no more. Her pursuit of knowledge, most evident in the visits to Lynx-Eyes, never becomes an end in itself. She seeks only wisdom. (This scene, incidentally, which has no equivalent in the original screenplay of the film, appears to be an insertion made later on by Fellini, most likely as a product of the "sacred phenomenon" of inspiration to which he has been said to subscribe.)

Jose brings to Juliet as well the promptings of the Open. He is perhaps the most spiritual of all the presences which appear to her. When he is first seen, he walks across the mist which covers Juliet's lawn as if he is an apparition from a dream, and even as late as his last appearance Juliet must still ask of him, "Are you real?" He brings to her a telescope, so he too, like the woman on television, helps to train her eyes, in this case, on the presence of Susy seen through the telescope. And he brings to her as well the Sangrilla promised by Bhisma, the drink of oblivion. This drink, dispensed in a mock communion rite, is a true benediction to Juliet in her oblivion. It satisfies all thirst, Jose proclaims, even the "thirst that is never confessed." Like Dr. Miller later on, Jose seems to comprehend that Juliet's greatest fear is of happiness, of the Open. All his talk to her thereafter is designed to instill in her confidence in the "lost calm" of everydayness. (The real nature of the drink he blesses her with is revealed in the original screenplay where it is called "Shangri-la." Jose asks her "Haven't you ever tasted it?" (p. 100). The secret hidden paradise

which Shangri-la traditionally suggests Jose then proceeds to eloquently describe for her, thereby awakening in her the "thirst" for it which until then she had not admitted to herself.)

His entire dinner-table discussion of bullfighting, for example, serves as a disguised message to Juliet on how to defeat her monster, imaged in this scene by Giorgio's bull-like charge, but in the context of her whole story, the oblivion of Being from which she seeks to escape. Jose describes to her the importance of "the grace of the movements, the balance" involved and calls it all a "matter of style and poetry." Like the woman on television, he teaches her the requisite precision required to escape the labyrinth in one leap of imagination. The bull is defeated, he claims, by "illusory blows," by "the magic by which he is guided," and in this context he can only be speaking of the movements of the eye, its ability to bring the flesh into a state of dehiscence. The defeated bull returns to "the void." The poetic is sustained; the Open is achieved. When Jose recites to her Garcia Lorca's lines about "the obscure magnolia in your womb," he brings to her yet again a message concerning her destiny. Juliet is childless, true, but the flowering of the magnolia in her womb, born finally at the movie's close, is a feat almost as great in its way as procreation.

When he again appears at the garden party his message has not changed; it has merely been adapted to fit the growth of Juliet. He no longer talks of Sangrilla, but instead becomes a spokesman for water, "something absolutely pure, trustworthy," and speaks of our "great need for simple things, things which don't hide something else." Juliet, who by this time has run the gauntlet of her spirits, is ready for this recall from the drink of oblivion to the element of water, this return from the Outside to the world of the common. As if she almost knows of the

ordeal, the Dark Night of the Soul which still lies before her, she asks Jose's final advice, and his reply is simple and in keeping: "I can't advise you, I want only that you live well." Jose has brought to Juliet, despite his own exotic presence, a new appreciation for the ordinary, for everydayness, and, within the context of her own development, a first glimpse of autochthony. When he advises her not to "be afraid of the truth--truth makes us free," it is certainly not the truth of Western tradition of which he speaks, it is truth as aletheia, the unhidden, unconcealed everyday serenity of the mere nothing of what is.

It would not be by becoming Susy, by partaking in the initiation rites of the body with which the residents of Susy's house hope to make her one of their own, that Juliet can become herself. She is not exotic (she rejects the temptation before the anniversary party to don the apparel and hence the being of her mother and sisters); she is not extroverted as, say, Valentina is: she is shy and pleasant but not outgoing ✓ at parties and in public; she is not domineering--she cannot even stand up to Giorgio and even to the end she worries about his meals; she is not sensual; she rejects not only Susy's profligate existence but Bhisma's advice that "Love is a religion" and wives need to ply their "trade" as seductively as courtesans. She is competent at small things, at everyday work, growing beautiful flowers, stringing peppers, at seeing the more than rational distortion. Her genius is to see and to be. Valentina for one envies Juliet's ability, as does Susy, and praises her meticulousness:

What a wonderful housewife you are! I can do absolutely nothing. What a shame. Why am I the way I am? I feel so lost, like I'm drifting. Peppers--they seem to be nothing, and yet, if I were able to prepare them, maybe I would be safe. (p. 217)

Judging by the reaction which this evokes from an average audience, it appears to be a throw-away, comic speech. But it is in fact revealing. Valentina understands with some precision the nature of the discovery that there is nothing to discover. The stringing of peppers, done well, done with, say, the same precision which Jose associates with bullfighting, could well be the Open. Autochthony, or for that matter the satori of Zen Buddhism, is not a revelation of some transcendental realm of the forms, but an awareness of the miraculous normality of pepper stringing, of all human work. (Buddha, after all, claimed that in his attainment of so-called enlightenment he had gained "nothing special": "I obtained not the least thing from unexcelled, complete awakening, and for this very reason it is called 'unexcelled, complete awakening.'"<sup>17</sup>)

At Susy's house lives a strange creature named Alyosha, a fetishist and a Russian, an impossible combination, as Susy observes, who has an insatiable yearning for Susy's shoes. In attempting to explain his behavior to Juliet, Susy's mother claims that "his beauty and seductiveness are all on the inside, but they don't show up on the outside." Here in this one minor figure, Fellini has created an aleph<sup>18</sup> through which the central problem of all his films, both before and after Juliet of the Spirits, may be seen at once. Can the grotesque and all uniqueness human and nonhuman, organic and inorganic, be seen for what it is? Is the world's inscape visible? Like Alyosha, Juliet contains within more beauty than the objective, rational, formal, Platonistic perception that her culture values is likely to see. Later, in Amarcord, even Gradisca, certainly more openly admired for her physical beauty than Juliet, worries aloud during the wait for the Rex that no one will

ever see her for what she truly is inside. But as Merleau-Ponty reminds, the "superficial pellicle of the visible" is not all there is to flesh; the depth of the visible contains even the inside as well; the depths of Being close in upon the body, filling and surrounding it, thereby guaranteeing the potential availability of even the inner world to perception (VI, p. 138). Therefore, though what Juliet is seems invisible, it is not de facto invisible, for her invisibility is merely hiding, and thus her story, the narrative of the metamorphosis of the inside into the Open is a homologue of the history of Being.

For it seems that like Juliet, Being, as the "mere nothing of what is," has been able to be what it is, not, of course, like Juliet out of a fear of being happy (as Dr. Miller rightly suggests), but from an innate, organic inability to show itself, like an old-fashioned girl, until the true marriage is complete and the wedding night has come and even then not naked, but clothed with the gaze of man, part now of her own flesh, which discloses that which can be Open only by never disclosing itself completely (as rationality would have it do), since the earth's refusal prohibits it, but by allowing it to be, after rationality's futile courtship.

Like that bride, Being has had a presentiment, if I may say so: that after being a secret for so long, after deliberately keeping itself in oblivion, it would seem more beautiful, and that after its hiding, its playing hard to get, its pursuer might have developed, after all his struggle and work, his technological and artistic creations, entropic and synergetic, his mimicry, enough heuristic imagination to see forever and ever all the charming gestures of its more than rational distortion without needing to exist apart in a solely human world, a hunter moving on into the distance, with only his creativity as a lifeline to sustain him in his prodigality.

Alyosha never succeeds at this feat; all that he is remains inside and his appearance before his world, therefore, can only be grotesque, for no eyes have sought him out in his hiding place and brought him out, as Fellini's eyes have sought out and discovered Juliet. He has not been discovered, although he seeks, naturally enough in the tradition of the West, the love of Susy, whose eroticism he thinks would be his salvation. Alyosha is a victim of idealism and eros, more radically but in the same general way as is most of Being, for he is one of those who, as Fellini himself has described (see Chapter Two, p. 58), fit neither the Greek model of physical beauty nor the Christian one of ethical beauty; he therefore must remain "outside life," loved by neither man nor God. It is the glory of Juliet to escape this dilemma. It is not so much love that saves her (although the worldly realism of true imagination values much the same things as does agape and the particular powers of each at least partly coincide), as the openness to aletheia which is the most valuable characteristic of a visual imagination like Fellini's.

As Juliet comes out of the secret sanctuary of her past confinement, out of her room, out of her house, and out through the gates into the world and unto la strada before her, she hears again voices. She seems at first perplexed, for she thought that the voices had been vanquished. But their urgency is intimate and their amity is certain.

Voices: Juliet . . . Juliet . . . Juliet . . .

Juliet: Who are you?

Voices: True friends, true friends, true friends. Now, if you want us to, we can stay, we can stay . . . Listen to us, listen closely . . . (p. 318; my italics)

Juliet then proceeds to walk on toward the sheltering woods beyond, evidently directed by these "true friends"; this stroll in the world

is nothing less than a guided tour and a victory walk, directed by earth's Saying. All of her angels have brought her messages of direction, but the Saying of these voices is different now: it is the Saying of the Open, the call of delight. A tradition of the West, with roots perhaps in the example set by God's verbal injunctions in Genesis, holds that words precede actions, that all motion must have a cause: God's words create earth, the elements, Adam, Eve. But Juliet's guided tour heeds a Saying which is no longer a verbal tyranny, no longer under the sway of a propositional logos, for as I have stressed throughout, Saying enters through the eyes. Its language is that of which Paul Valery was thinking when he suggested that language actually is everything, being the voice of no one, but rather the voices of things, trees, waves, animals.<sup>19</sup>

Earlier in her house while she awaits the departure of Giorgio, Juliet sits aimlessly watching the television, as she had done before during her moments of waiting, including the occasion when she trained her eyes. Among the various images which appear there is a series in which some "clowns and dancers" frolic across the screen. The camera moves away to follow Giorgio and Juliet, but when it returns to the screen it focuses on the face of a clearly Auguste clown, emblematic to Fellini, as he has explained, of a relativistic, finite Being-in-the-world, or as he calls it, "a sinner." The television camera moves in for a closeup, and the face looms larger. Glancing directly at the motion picture camera, which has in fact become in a subjective shot Juliet herself, he smiles. This face-to-face benediction from a clown in the time of her greatest need, an assurance that all is well coming from the figure in Fellini's imagination most clearly representative of the "unity of being" (see Chapter Two, p. 67), is an angelic

message. With her new-found courage she defies her mother and frees her martyred being. The precedent for this act of courage was set, of course, by her grandfather, a man likewise associated with the circus. The same Saying speaks through both Grandfather and the TV clown.

And this face-to-face gesture, from one Dasein to another, Juliet perceives and then expresses, transmogrifying it through all the depth of her own being. When the true friends announce themselves, Juliet turns toward the camera and, after a moment of contemplation, lifts her eyes to meet the camera's gaze, a gesture which Giulietta Masina had already enacted once before in Nights of Cabiria. But there it was not yet a part of the flesh, but a black and white image and, as the final image of the film, without any depth. Juliet, in contrast, goes on to move about in her world. She herself is open, and she moves in the Open. This face which remained hidden for so long at the beginning of the film, as if to delay dramatically the seeing of something miraculous, now smiles iridescently. And what it Says is, to this viewer at least, a transaction almost too moving to bear. All of Fellini's films up to this moment can be seen as an imaginative effort to produce this moment. Its joyousness and serenity cannot really be experienced fully by anyone who does not see it in the context of the failures of Zampano, Cabiria, Augusto, Marcello, and even Guido to achieve this kind of openness and in the context as well of Fellini's own insistence that

My work can't be anything other than a testimony of what I am looking for in life. It is a mirror of my searching. . . . For myself freed. In this respect, I think, there is no cleavage or difference of content or style in all my films. From first to last, I have struggled to free myself from the past, from the education laid upon me as a child. (Playboy, p. 58)

If Fellini is in fact a pathological liar, I suggest that the only wise



thing to do is to believe him here, and to view Grandfather's rebellion at the school pageant and Juliet's own releasing of her younger self from the grate with eyes guided by that belief.

Soren Kierkegaard, in Fear and Trembling, described a heroic creature whom he called "the knight of faith." Filled with infinite resignation, this knight, having glimpsed the infinite, returns to the finite with a new vigor; he has made the Journey Out and Back. He makes the "motions of infinity with such correctness . . . that he constantly gets the finite out of it." He is like a dancer who is able "to leap into a definite posture in such a way that there is not a second when he is grasping after the posture, but by the leap itself he stands fixed in that posture." He can leap into the air, after the infinite, and "fall down in such a way that the same second it looks as if [he] were standing and walking" and is thus able "to transform the leap of life into a walk, absolutely to express the sublime and the pedestrian." To him "finiteness tastes . . . just as good as to one who has never known anything higher. . . ." This man's story seems clearly to be the western equivalent of Zen Buddhism's "First there is a mountain" narrative.<sup>20</sup> But who is this man? How can we know him by his appearance? What are his characteristics? Kierkegaard answers in this way:

I candidly admit in my practice I have not found any reliable example of the knight of faith, though I would not therefore deny that every second man may be such an example. . . . I have not found any such person, but I can well think him. Here he is. Acquaintance made, I am introduced to him. The moment I set eyes on him I instantly push him from me, I myself leap backwards, I clasp my hands and say half aloud, "Good Lord, is this the man? Is it really he? Why, he looks like a tax-collector!" However, it is the man after all.<sup>21</sup>

Juliet of the Spirits is the story of such a knight of faith. Juliet's

place in the finite world is emphasized by the movie's last real speech. Juliet asks her Grandfather to take her with him on his plane, a journey which could end only outside and thus be, in effect, the same journey school friend Laura had already asked her to make. Grandfather refuses, claiming truly that his plane "doesn't go anywhere. It has only come this far." Denied access to the skies, she must become pedestrian. He bids goodbye to Juliet, saying, in a final angelic message:

Don't hold on to me--you don't need me any longer. I too am an invention of yours; but you are flesh and blood.<sup>22</sup>

No longer requiring the unearthly values which the infinite aspiration of romantic love cherishes and content in her autochthony with the "daily miracle of simple reality," she feels no need.

But Fellini's imagination did not remain in the place within the flesh which Juliet clears. It remains prodigal, wayward (literally), exploring fully in Fellini-Satyricon (1970) and (to some extent) The Clowns (1970), the "motions of infinity" fully, in fact exhausting them, so that with Roma (1971) and Amarcord (1973), Fellini's imagination returns fully to the finite and the immanent within the flesh. In Juliet of the Spirits, one dichotomy yet remained at the movie's close; that of the knight of faith, Juliet herself, and her angelic spirits. But by Amarcord that dichotomy too disappears, and virtually all of the beings of Fellini's "I remember" become aspiring or accomplished knights of faith, and Fellini's no longer prodigal imagination runs free from first image to last in the Open.

<sup>1</sup>"Fellini's Double City," in The Emergence of Film Art, ed. Lewis Jacobs (New York: Hopkinson and Blake, 1969), p. 347.

<sup>2</sup>In the discussion of Juliet which follows I am deeply indebted to W. R. Robinson's two superlative analyses of the film: "If You Don't

See *You're Dead: The Immediate Encounter with the Image in 'Hiroshima Mon Amour' and 'Juliet of the Spirits,' Part II.* Contempora, 2, No. 4 (1973), pp. 11-16, 18-19, and p. 22, and "Juliet's Love of Life," unpublished manuscript.

<sup>3</sup>Woody Allen's most recent film, Annie Hall, contains a parody of the typical Fellini critic. The anti-Fellini diatribe he delivers, dismissing all the films since La Strada as the ravings of a lunatic, is almost word-for-word Pauline Kael or John Simon. In a recent New Yorker, for example, Juliet of the Spirits is described (probably by Kael) as Fellini's look "at a mousey wife's fantasy life; her unconscious seems to be stuffed with leftover decor from MGM musicals. A peculiarly ungallant film" (New Yorker, 6 Feb. 1978, p. 17).

<sup>4</sup>For a discussion of the relationship of left and right brain activities see Howard Gardner, The Shattered Mind (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975), Ornstein, The Psychology of Consciousness (New York: Viking Press, 1972), or Jaynes, The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1976).

<sup>5</sup>The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats (New York: Macmillan, 1956), p. 336.

<sup>6</sup>Letters to a Young Poet, trans. M. D. Herter Norton (New York: W. W. Norton, 1954), p. 54; my italics.

<sup>7</sup>Letters to a Young Poet, p. 59.

<sup>8</sup>Juliet of the Spirits, p. 189. Unless otherwise explained, all quotations from the film are taken from the final transcription of the film included in this book. The page numbers for important citations will hereafter be cited in the text.

<sup>9</sup>The phenomenon of closed-eye vision is worthy of further study. A starting point might be two quotations cited by Geoffrey Hartman in The Unmediated Vision (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich, 1966). The first is from Rilke, the second from Paul Eluard:

He remembered the hour in that other southern garden, when both outside and within him, the cry of a bird was correspondingly present, did not, so to speak, break upon the barriers of his body, but gathered inner and outer together into one uninterrupted space, in which, mysteriously protected, only one spot of purest, deepest consciousness remained. That time he had shut his eyes, so as not to be confused in so generous an experience by the contour of his body, and the infinite passed into him so intimately from every side, that he could believe he felt the light reposing of the already appearing stars within his breast. (p. 140)

First I was overcome by a great yearning for solemnity and pomp. I felt cold. All my being, living and corrupt, aspired to the rigidity of the dead. Then I was tempted by a mystery in which forms play no part. Inquisitive about a washed out sky from which the birds and the clouds are banished, I became the slave of the pure faculty of sight, the slave of my unreal and virgin eyes, ignoring both the world and themselves. A

tranquil power. I suppressed the visible and the invisible,  
I lost myself in a mirror without silvering. Indestructible,  
I was not blind. (p. 171-72)

Is it possible that the more than rational distortion might be seen somehow without the eyes?

<sup>10</sup>In "Why Clowns?" Fellini explains that as a child he imagined the circus to be an invasion of pirates and the tent a very odd boat. Is this the source of this image? (Strich, p. 128)

<sup>11</sup>The term was coined by Dylan Thomas to describe those who flocked to hear his poetry readings in America.

<sup>12</sup>From The Tree of Wisdom, quoted by R. D. Laing in The Facts of Life (New York: Pantheon, 1976), p. 89.

<sup>13</sup>Love in the Western World (New York: Harper and Row, 1956), p. 39. All future references to this book will be cited in the text.

<sup>14</sup>Laura, we are informed, killed herself for love, but since in the context of the film the only unfulfilled love she feels is for God (since Grandfather's interruption of the pageant prevented Juliet from conveying Laura's petition), we are forced to assume she drowned herself because she felt God had forsaken her.

<sup>15</sup>"Primal Sound," Selected Works, Vol. I (London: Hogarth Press, 1954), p. 55.

<sup>16</sup>Merleau-Ponty has claimed for this reason that in the visible there "is never anything but ruins of the spirit" (VI, p. 180); for every visual quality is "a fossil drawn up from the depths of imaginary worlds" (VI, p. 132).

<sup>17</sup>Cited in Alan Watts, The Way of Zen (New York: Vintage Books, 1957), p. 126.

<sup>18</sup>The word signifies the first letter in the Cabalist alphabet. I borrow its use here from Borges' short story of the same name in which it signifies a mythical point in space from which one may view all other points. See Personal Anthology (New York: Grove Press, 1957), pp. 132-150.

<sup>19</sup>Cited in The Visible and the Invisible, p. 155.

<sup>20</sup>De Rougemont, incidentally, identifies the partner of any successful marriage with the knight of faith (p. 320-321).

<sup>21</sup>A Kierkegaard Anthology, ed. Robert Bretall (New York: Modern Library, 1946), pp. 119-121. The discussion of the knight of faith is in Fear and Trembling.

<sup>22</sup>I am here citing the subtitle from the film itself. The transcription of the film at this point reads:

Good-bye. Don't hold on to me--you don't need me any longer. I, too, am an invention of yours; but you are full of life. (p. 317)

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FELLINI'S AMARCORD: "A CELEBRATION OF THE LIGHT"

The seasons of "the year" give to man in the changing of the Serene that time which has been meted out for his historical sojourn in the "house." "The year" sends its greeting in the play of the light. The serenifying light is the first "angel of the year."

Martin Heidegger

And round and round, the merely going round  
Until merely going round is a final good,  
The way wine comes at a table in a wood.

And we enjoy like men, the way a leaf  
Above the table spins its constant spin,  
So that we look at it with pleasure, look

At its spinning its eccentric measure. Perhaps,  
The man-hero is not the exceptional monster,  
But he that of repetition is most master.

Wallace Stevens, "Notes Toward  
a Supreme Fiction"

One finds it in the open country, in the village and in the town. It is in everything which God created. Maids throw it on the street. Children play with it.

A sixteenth century alchemist on the philosopher's stone,  
quoted by Annie Dillard in Pilgrim at Tinker Creek

In Oriental thought, in both Taoism and Zen Buddhism, the true source of art is presumed to be the interplay between Emptiness, or the Void, and the "ten thousand things" of the world.<sup>1</sup> In painting, this interplay is captured through the use of what is called "one corner style," a sense of pictorial composition which attempts to treat space itself as meaningful and much more than merely the interval between

things, and by "direct pointing," the conjuring of images of concrete things, a bird, a branch, a mountain, a flower, within the Emptiness, which is itself an image of the Tao, the way of the earth.<sup>2</sup> In haiku and in the Zen Buddhist teaching device known as the koan this same style prevails. As poems, haikus are not discourses; rather they thrust before our attention something to experience as a way of countering the human propensity for symbolism and abstraction; they "direct point" at the earth. The aim of the perplexity of the koan is to solicit from the student an answer of mu, or "unask the question," in order to direct the perception of the student back toward the concrete world and away from the mere radiocinative workings of the mind.<sup>3</sup> This genius for the ordinary and the concrete in painting, haiku, and the koan is possible in Oriental aesthetics because all things are themselves believed to be radiant, shining with what the Japanese call iki; that is, all things are thought to be aesthetic in the original Greek meaning of the word.<sup>4</sup> Art, therefore, needs only to celebrate them, or as the composer Edgard Varese once put it, keep pace with their radiance by "keeping up with the speed of light" (see Appendix V, p. 251). Federico Fellini's Amarcord (1973) realizes this end; it is, consequently, a "celebration of the light," its saga.

The word saga shares its etymology with saying. It is, in fact, the story which Saying, as I have defined it, tells. Saga as I will use it here has little to do with its normal definition--a long story of adventure or heroic exploits; as the story of Saying and the way to which that Saying belongs, a saga narrates the ordinary. It is an Open Narrative, open to the way of the earth, from which it draws its inspiration and its autotelic structure. A celebration of the seasons of the year, Amarcord receives the gift which, according to Heidegger (see

epigraph above), this changing brings, the Serene, and celebrates as well the angelic light which is its medium.

In "Asphodel that Greeny Flower," William Carlos Williams' long love poem written late in life, the poet discovers this same angelic light and celebrates it so vividly that its illumination will I hope enable me to better clarify the nature of Amarcord's similar celebration. In Paterson, Williams had pronounced to his fellow poets instructions on the ways of his art:

Say it, no ideas but in things--  
Nothing but the blank faces of the houses

and cylindrical trees  
bent, forked by preconception and accident--

split, furrowed, creased, mottled, stained--  
secret--into the body of the light. (p. 6; my italics)

In "Asphodel" Williams journeys into that "body of the light" and records its Saying.

"Asphodel" is a love poem written to Williams' wife Flossie. It is a plea for forgiveness for a sin or sins which Williams never names outright. Its form is a digressive monologue in which Williams remembers their life together, a "life filled/if you will,/with flowers,"<sup>5</sup> and approaching death, tries to find some total affirmation with which they can meet the unfolding storm approaching over the Atlantic, their deaths, "the flower/that will soon reach/the apex of its bloom." In The Poets of Reality, J. Hillis Miller has illuminated brilliantly all the deep resonances of the poem in the light of Williams' total work and argued that the poem is the consummate achievement of twentieth century American poetry, an almost total reconciliation with the immanence of the world and with death, one which Stevens, Dylan Thomas, T. S. Eliot, William Butler Yeats achieved fitfully or not at all. For

with "Asphodel," Williams brings his imagination to rest in what he calls "that sweetest interval," the moment of creation in which the forces of light outrace forever and ever the forces of darkness; it is from that interval that all poems are snatched; in that interval spring blossoms. In "Asphodel" the interval appears as the fraction of time between the flash of lightning of the oncoming storm and the crack of thunder which follows it in human perception.<sup>6</sup> Although the oncoming storm is Williams' own death, he faces it with assurance:

Inseparable from the fire  
                   its light  
                                   takes precedence over it.  
 Then follows  
                   what we have dreaded--  
                                   but it can never  
 overcome what has gone before.  
                   In the huge gap  
                                   between the flash  
 and the thunderstroke  
                   spring has come in           (p. 178-79)

Knowing that life will supercede him he is content; he identifies his art with the genetic force of the lightning. But his understanding brings with it an obligation to love, for it is in

that interval  
     that sweetest interval  
         when love will blossom      (p. 179)

and that love which is born is indistinguishable from human imagination:

love and the imagination  
are of a piece,  
swift as the light  
to avoid destruction. (p. 179)

With the triad completed, light, love, and imagination joined as one power, there remains for Williams only one last realization: to link them all to the flesh and thereby to discover that there is nothing to discover. In all of human history, he writes, through all peace and all war, all sadness and all joy,



the palm goes  
always to the light (p. 180)

and therefore the only certainty is that the light, the enveloping  
flesh which sustains everything that is and which shows itself forth  
in the more than rational distortion of human perception and transmits  
itself in the Saying of the imagination,<sup>7</sup>

for all time shall outspeed  
the thunder crack. (p. 181)

Keeping up with that light, Williams heeds its "direct pointing"; he  
understands that:

Medieval pageantry  
is human and we enjoy  
the rumor of it  
as in our world we enjoy  
the reading of Chaucer  
likewise  
a priest's raiment  
(or that of a savage chieftain)  
It is all  
a celebration of the light.  
All the pomp and ceremony  
of weddings,  
"Sweet Thames, run softly  
till I end my song,"--  
are of an equal sort. (p. 181; my italics)

Joseph Riddel has shown how Williams throughout his career thought  
of this all-encompassing light as encased in the earth, just as radium  
(one of the primary subjects of Paterson) is hidden within pitchblende  
until released. Williams believed that the prosaic, a kind of materi-  
alism, shut out this light and that the poetic alone could free the  
"radiant gist."<sup>8</sup> Williams' art, Riddel suggests, should then be viewed  
as his attempt to achieve a relationship to this "radiant gist" through  
various means of poetic innovation ("elimination of perspective and  
the breaking-up of the expected") which would eliminate the stereotyped,  
or prosaic attitude. Consequently, it "tends to define itself as other  
than art, since art presumes another kind of coherence (centered). . . ."<sup>9</sup>

"Aphodel," like most of Williams' work, is this art which seems "other than art." It appears to be a meandering remembrance whose structure is a mixture of the triadic (in the form of its lines) and quadratic (the overall structure of the poem consists of three separate sections plus a synthesizing coda in which the "sweetest interval" is incorporated as the very element of poetry). (Williams thinks of this incorporation as an unfolding:

As I think of it now,  
                                 after a lifetime,  
   it is as if  
 a sweet-scented flower  
                                 were poised  
   and for me did open. (p. 182)

"Asphodel that Greeny Flower" is a verbal attempt at time-lapse photography, at a narrative of emergence which is one of the particular geniuses of the movies; see Appendix V.) "Asphodel's" coming to dwell in the "sweetest interval" is won; out of the internal debate and dialectical struggle which constitute the first three sections of the poem, the light escapes the threat of extinction.

Where "Asphodel that Greeny Flower" ends, Fellini's Amarcord as a "celebration of the light" begins. It exists in its entirety in that "sweetest interval" which is the Open. It is itself a coda to the works of imagination which have preceded it and, in a sense, won for Fellini through their prodigal Journey Out and Back the place in the topology of the flesh which it occupies. It is an autotelic narrative which includes within it its own creative history and which needs only nothing, for the imagination which produced it has already secured that which sustains it.<sup>10</sup> And like Roma, it seems to some critics to be "other than art."

Heidegger once pondered what the result might be if man ceased

miscasting all things by the power of the "ought." He asked:

What if Appropriation [his word for man's acquisition of the news of Saying--literally "making proper"]--no one knows when or how--were to become an insight whose illuminating lightning flash enters into what is and what is taken to be? What if Appropriation, by its entry, were to remove everything that is in present being from its subjection to a commandeering order and bring it back into its own? (OWL, p. 133)

He supplies the answer elsewhere: in order for this to occur,

A stilling would have to come about that quiets the breath of the vastness into the structure of Saying which calls out to the messenger. (OWL, p. 53)

Amarcord, I will attempt to show, is such a stillness in which the eternally recurrent "ways of the flesh" of Fellini's imagination come into their own and are let be (love, imagination, and the light now being equals as they are in "Asphodel" and at the end of Juliet of the Spirits), and, therefore, shine with serenity.<sup>11</sup>

Wallace Stevens imagined a time when the "lion of Judah" would walk the streets of New Haven as well, "potent in the sun" with a "minimum of making in the mind." But he knew too that such a realization would entail

The propounding of four seasons and twelve months,  
The brilliancy at the central of the earth. (CP, p. 473)

Amarcord is not a "hostile satire" on the will to illusion, as Stuart Rosenthal has suggested, but rather this propounding. The basically triadic structure of earlier Fellini narratives, and of the "first there is a mountain" narrative as well, has no bearing here. Amarcord is a round; it needs only what the earth itself needs as fulfillment: the four seasons and the twelve months. Its making is therefore minimal, the essential mimicry of Fellini's imagination having already been completed with Roma. It is an imaginative remembering, as its title indicates, but one in which the re-membering brings not just atonement

with the past, but re-mem-bering with the earth itself. In Amarcord, waywardness is transformed; the earth itself begins to come face-to-face.

Interestingly, many critics alienated by Fellini's films since Nights of Cabiria hailed Amarcord as a return of the Fellini of old, and such remarks are in their way perceptive.<sup>12</sup> For in Amarcord Fellini comes full circle. Amarcord is to Fellini's neo-realist beginning as the second "then there is a mountain" of the Zen parable is to the first "there is a mountain." If, as Andre Bazin saw, Nights of Cabiria marked the journey to the far side of neo-realism, Amarcord is the prodigal return. Like the films of neo-realism, Amarcord is a film of facts, but facts as Wallace Stevens understood them, poetic facts, the facts of the imagination, touched by the flesh and in themselves a Saying.

Fellini has described a 1967 journey he made to his home town of Rimini (the erstwhile location of Amarcord). In this period in which his imagination was dominated by an almost unearthly vision (he was about to begin work on Fellini-Satyricon), Fellini felt himself to be in the midst of a process of metamorphosis in which even the local must have seemed to bring to him hints of a new understanding.<sup>13</sup> Like marriage and the family, it had in previous films been depicted as a force working against growth. In I Vitelloni, for example, individuation and provincialism seem to be totally at odds. But in 1967, upon his return to Rimini, Fellini appears to have acquired new eyes. He claimed that "This unknown Rimini . . . seemed to be trying to tell me . . . that it had changed and so I had better change as well" (Strich, p. 40). The making of Amarcord lay six years in the future at this time, a time in

which Fellini, by his own pronouncement, sought, in making Fellini-Satyricon, "an unknown world for me to populate." This was the time as well of the first abortive attempts to complete The Voyage of G. Mastorna, a film which he still hopes to finish. But the prodigal son's discovery would not be forgotten; in Amarcord, Fellini's imagination becomes prodigal as well, returning from the Outside to the Open. His angel, after all, has always waited, as he has explained, behind him. Its Saying begins in Amarcord concurrently with the movie itself.

Nothing in the first images of Amarcord seems at first glance to be a radical departure from previous Fellini films. Amarcord opens on an image of the title itself, for the time being untranslated, followed by a stationary shot of a back yard, a house, a woman, and a clothes-line on which hang a sheet and summer dresses put out to air. Immediately the wind begins to blow and the sheet, reminiscent of the wrapping sheets which fill Guido's world in 8 1/2, billows in the wind. Spring announces itself to the inhabitants of the town in the form of the "little hands," or manine, the aerial seeds of a thistle or another plant which float about the town, spirited by the same wind which blows the clothes. The townspeople grab for the, each trying to capture the largest. Giudizio, the village idiot, as he was in I Vitelloni, The Clowns, and Roma, narrates the arrival of spring, face-to-face with the camera. The puffs go everywhere, he explains, over the beach where the hardy Germans swim despite the cold water, even over the graveyard, where later in the film Titta's mother will be buried. Most of all they just drift, and Giudizio repeats the word three times loudly and excitedly as if their ubiquity were an enviable ability. The scene is magical only in its ordinariness. The sheets and the wind have appeared

again and again in Fellini's films; so have the sea, the church, and the piazza shown in the early shots of the film. Giudizio himself is not even new, nor is the way he looks directly at the camera to tell us of the puffs. The lighting of the fogarazza in the scene which follows and the burning of the witch of winter are not new: festivals figure prominently in nearly all of Fellini's films. Fellini has always claimed that he is continuously making the same film, and the opening of Amarcord confirms this emphatically.

The change, the new element, is so small that it almost escapes attention. It is the puffs themselves that are new. They set the film in motion, and later on they will signal its ending in another spring and a marriage. They are angelic messengers; like Juliet's true friends, they are a promise of serenity. But unlike them they need not be won within a narrative. They exist prior to the narrative; the world of Amarcord lives for and within the Saying that the puffs of spring bring to it; Amarcord exists in the Open. Fellini's imagination with Amarcord surrenders the desire for the willfully new; it embraces the eternally recurrent "ways of the flesh" and celebrates them, in its time-lapse photography heeding and answering an unfolding emergence which need not be won.

I have shown already how interwoven in all of Fellini's films the presence of earth, air, fire, and water serve as elemental visual koans through which the flesh shows itself beyond all logical and propositional manipulation by the intellect. In Amarcord, too, the elements solicit the perplexity of the inhabitants of the town and consequently establish in them a sort of resignation to wonder and reverie.

When the town goes to sea to meet the Rex, Aurelio, during the long wait for the ship's arrival, stares in amazement at the stars

overhead. On a later occasion he admits to his brother Teo, whose full attention is focused on the shape of an egg, his own sense of awe before the ordinary, insisting that he too could gaze at one all day, so miraculous is its form. But on this occasion, his powers of wonder have become cosmic. He gestures towards the stars and asks: "What keeps it all up there anyway?" The novelization of the film enlarges upon his "openness to the mystery."<sup>14</sup> There he asks:

How does this great edifice manage to stand up? Let's face it, it's not very difficult to put up a building: you just calculate how many tons of cement you need, how many bricks-- but Holy Mary Mother of God, if you're building in the air, where the hell do you put the foundations? And it's no mere bauble . . . the weight of the world . . . earth, earth, endless and infinite earth. . . .<sup>15</sup>

A bricklayer by profession, Aurelio naturally tries to metaphorize from what he knows, but he ends incapable of such a feat. The elements in their arrangement, continuity, and interrelationship are beyond his power to grasp with his understanding and must be granted their freedom to be without being known, without ever being completely discovered. For Fellini's characters since the beginning of his career, familiarity has bred contempt (consider, for example, the plight of Marcello in La Dolce Vita), and his internal war with form has, consequently, undertaken to achieve a balance between knowledge and wonder. Here in the face of mystery Aurelio accomplishes such a balance, a resignation, if I may say so, to being familiar with wonder, a surrender to a kind of trust that the earth and its elements as the home of man shelter him without requiring his understanding to enact their gifts, for they are his element.

The air of Amarcord dries the clothes on the line; carries the "little hands" of spring and their message; ripples the tarpaulin over the wedding of Gradisca and her "Gary Cooper"; blows across the open field by the sea in the movie's closing image.

The fire burns in Volpina's loins, instills in Amarcord's youth the yearning which keeps wonder, sexual and otherwise, alive, and aids their attempted survival of their own education; lights the torch which burns the witch of winter.

The water supports the town in its pilgrimage to see the Rex; surrounds their lives, a formless being which generates within real individuals; turns to snow, obliterating color in a whiteness that would be madness and death if it endured; as a fog, obscures all vision, but nourishes human yearnings.

The earth of Amarcord is in its bodies, the subject and object of the fire, the ground of the ways of the flesh.

With the need to see and experience the physical, elemental earth so predominant in the people of Amarcord, the dense fog which comes one autumn morning brings with it an emotion close to fear, obliterating as it does the town's normally tacit autochthony. It is like a return to the oblivion of Being, to a black and white world without depth in which nothing is what it seems and the flesh of the world is sucked back into the void. Grandfather, as purely sensual as he is, becomes quickly lost in it, not even recognizing his own house. He contemplates aloud the significance of the phenomenon and, finding it literally abysmal, defies it:

If death is like this it's not very nice. No trees, no birds, no wine. Up yours!

His "obscene" gesture here mocks a greater obscenity: the loss of the Open and the eternal delight of vision and the flesh.

In the midst of the oblivion of the foggy morning, Oliva leaves for school, to the utter amazement of Grandfather, encountering on the way an alien landscape, a mysterious vehicle, and a menacing bull which



might well have emerged from Picasso's frightening "Minotauromachy" series. Nevertheless, he braves them all and goes on his way to receive an education which, in light of the movie, is more likely the cause of this obscuring of vision than its clarification.

But within the fog powers are nevertheless at work which will disperse it. For Amarcord autotelically contains all the energy which it needs for its own imaginative sustaining. Pinwheel, at the docks, tells tales, as he always does, summoning the narrative powers so essential to the dispersal of oblivion, and on the steps of the Grand Hotel the boys of the Fourth Form act out their dreams.<sup>16</sup> Lost in the midst of their youthful "infinite yearning" (p. 11), their imaginings become real. Looking into the empty lobby of the hotel, they see themselves in love, dancing, playing the music that their lives will be, like the blind accordion player. Schnozzle begins by playing the saxophone, bending low, crooning the beloved. Martoni and Berlouin accompany him on the bass viol and drums respectively. And Titta and the others dance on in the midst of oblivion.

This is the archetypal Fellini occasion, eternally recurrent. From it have sprung Wanda's escape into the arms of the White Sheik, Gelsomina's trumpet playing, Cabiria's wildly spontaneous dances on the street corners and in night clubs, Marcello's decadent orchestration of the night of revels, the parade around the circus ring in the finale of 8 1/2, Grandfather's dismissal of the "bores" in Juliet of the Spirits, Encolpio's escape with the Greek and African at the end of Fellini-Satyricon, the magical regeneration of Fishietto and, subsequently, the quantum jump transition from the old clown's verbal memory of his act with Fru Fru to their stunning visual presence in The Clowns,

the roaring away of the motorcycles at the end of Roma. In all these events, imagination takes sensory form; "reality" is transfigured, taking on the "fiction that results from feeling" of which Stevens speaks. Each is a color of the flesh, a flowering out of its dehiscent growth, part of a process which makes the depth seem no longer at the horizon, but proximate, an enactment of mimicry. Stevens declared that "Reality is not what it is" but consists rather "in what it can be made into" (OP, p. 178; see also Appendix II). This scene shows, it would seem, reality being made into what it is, and the act is indistinguishable from the ordinary. There is about it an "infinite resignation," a sense of discovery which only a Kierkegaardian "knight of faith" can possess, imagination turning infinite yearning into the finitude of the moment and then transforming it further until the whole process of discovery becomes itself instantaneous, almost nothing--second nature.

Amarcord's "knights of resignation" and "knights of faith" express their "being indoors" or "sakes" (Hopkins) perhaps most clearly in their gestures. Gestures are, as I showed in Chapter Two, features of mimicry, earmarks of the relative success of the project of, as Hopkins once explained it, putting oneself "in rhyme" with the world. Captured by Fellini's imaginative eye and by the power of what Balazs called the movies' "second glance," Amarcord's "direct pointing" at these phenomena is a way in which what they are shines through. Whether they are the products of his actors' nearly impeccable performances or instilled through direction by Fellini himself out of the cornucopia memory of gestures he has stored in his "eye-pouch," they all seem to be unique, to be, inimitably: mother's eyes crossing with anger; father's attempt to pull his jaws wide open as a gesture of rage; the

sensual mouth and eyes of Volpina; the history teacher's ridiculously mannered style of smoking and his precarious cigarette ash; the blind accordion player's spit of disgust and his leg lashing out at his tormentors ("Well, I guess that shows us!"); Greased Lightning's playful racing through the streets; the Count's aunt's hand rubbing her stomach in a circular motion as she celebrates the festival of spring with a rare drink ("Even your aunt takes a nip sometimes"); the wiggle of Gradisca's buttocks to the music of a flute; the vanity of Father Balossa as he nervously tries to arrange his hair properly before the class picture is snapped; Signorina Leonardis' thrusting forth of her breasts as she walks; Grandfather's in and out pumping gesture for sexual intercourse; Titta's father bowing to the unseen neighbors in order to rescue his image as a gentleman; the noses of the boys pressed grotesquely against the town clerk's window; the ugly sneer of the disabled war veteran who asks, in response to Aurelio's rebellious socialism, "Why won't they understand? . . ."; Pinwheel's exclamation of delight as he turns to answer the summons of the harem; Giudizio's exuberant bouncing up and down, a cigarette in his mouth, staring at the camera; Titta's attempt to hypnotize a turkey during the picnic with Teo; the bulging stomach of an obese man who walks along the pier; Aurelio's offering of his coat to keep his wife warm while waiting for the Rex; the midget nun's scolding of Teo; the Prince's underlings sneaking off so he can be alone with Gradisca; Oliva's knocking knees as he meets the bull; the dance on the steps of the Grand Hotel in the fog; this list is only a beginning. These gestures anchor Fellini's imagination in the quotidian in a way that none of his other films achieve. Each is an image of haiku-like precision and has the same effect: a celebration of the miraculously ordinary prehensions of

everydayness without which the mind would have nothing to think about, a direct pointing at a diversity of inscapes so abundant that no mind could hope to classify them. To immerse oneself in them without glossing or condemnation (which make them devices, symbols and not Sayings, elevating them beyond the world and beyond their simple being) is to begin to step, as Stevens put it, "barefoot into reality."<sup>18</sup>

But their gestures are not the only way in which Amarcord's characters show forth their inscape. Their bodies, intertwined with the flesh and, thanks to the movies' inherent ability to overthrow what Bakhtin called the "bodily canon of art" which has dominated the art of the west for four hundred year, seen as genuine incarnations, become, even in their scatological grotesqueness, a Saying. Bakhtin insisted, it will be remembered, that the canon's imposed strictures prevent man from achieving a vital link-up between his body and the cosmos, a connection which once produced on the level of folklore (and in the writings of Rabelais), "true human fearlessness." For the grotesque was and can again be a celebration of the assimilation within man of the elements outside and hence the source of a kind of at-homeness in which even death does not appear as a threat (see Chapter Two, p. 61). Amarcord's disregard for the canon is a prime internal force at work behind its own resurrection and the celebration of the elemental Eleusinian mysteries.

According to Bakhtin, among the bodily canon's major objectives were: 1) to always present an image of bodies as individual and complete; 2) to eliminate all protrusions; 3) to close all orifices; 4) to eliminate all signs of an inner bodily life; 5) to hide all indications of bodily fecundity (Bakhtin, p. 320). Every one of these rules is broken in Amarcord. Although Fellini-Satyricon and Roma are

equally as bawdy and incarnated, it is with Amarcord for the first time that Fellini's obsessive attention to the ways and means of the flesh does not smack of a mere sensual rebellion against repression. The farting, defecation, masturbation, anality, ample posteriors, and mammoth breasts are not merely Freud's "return of the repressed"; they are rather that which, requiring little or no imagination to create, is perhaps closest to us, and therefore needs (paradoxically) most of all to be discovered. With the canon gone, the grotesque body and the flesh are discovered to form a grotesque unity.

A study might be written of Fellini's artistic use of the fart in his movies. Certainly it would need to make explicit the relationship of the everpresent Rabelaisian fart and the always recurrent "wind" which blows through Fellini's films. Both violate the bodily canon's injunction against showing the "inner life" of the flesh. The wind of Amarcord blows through both the opening and closing images of the film and in several other scenes as well. In the high school, for example, during the art teacher's alcohol-aided lecture on Giotto and "la perspective," Titta interrupts to announce that Ovo, the obese boy next to him in class, has just farted. Ovo denies the charge of course, insisting that "he always holds them in," and he looks about him beseechingly to his fellow classmates (all of whom laugh and blush, for they too are probably fighting the hourly civilized battle, imposed by the bodily canon, to repress their gas), hoping to be absolved of his shame. His low hanging head and embarrassed voice bring a shock of recognition in any viewer, and like all the marvellous gestures which the film portrays, reveal how extensive and precise the notes taken by Fellini's eye-pouch and reported by his imagination actually are.

Wind seems to beget wind in Amarcord. Ovo answers the "hot air"

of the art teacher's tedious lecture with air of his own, and later on, at the family dinner scene, Titta's grandfather does likewise. To the consternation resulting from the discovery that Titta has urinated on Biondi's hat, Grandfather has only one solution. He quietly leaves the room, which resounds with the threats and counterthreats of Aurelio and Miranda, and adjourns to the next room. There, he grabs hold of a chair with both hands, bends slightly, and farts rhythmically, as if relieving himself of all the tension in the air.

Grandfather is a scatological poet of sorts. When he and his mad son Teo leave the carriage to urinate beside the road, he recites for him two rhymes to celebrate the value of an activity which he insists, perhaps metaphorically, is "always better in the open": "To be fit as a fiddle/a man's got to piddle" and "There's something amiss if a man can't piss," both of which are certainly sound, bodily wisdom.<sup>19</sup> This passing of water is only one of many which occur in Amarcord. Water, in this Rabelaisian fashion at least, is as prevalent, if not more so, than the scatological "air." Like the fart, urination's function in the film is literally elemental, part of an exchange with the earth which gives the lie to the canon's absurd belief that the individual is complete and not even a metabolic being. In Amarcord the juices of the flesh flow ordinarily. The population of the town takes easily to the water, as we see when almost all of them (except the repressed and repressing teachers and the sensual fire of Volpina) go out unto the sea to meet the Rex. And urination comes as easily to them as seafaring. Titta urinates on Biondi's hat, the boys water the dying embers of the fogarazza, Volpina squats naturally on the beach. Urination even enters the hallowed classroom. As a boy with heavily greased hair, overdressed in a suit and bowtie, tries futilely to complete a problem presented to

him on the blackboard by the math teacher, Signorina Leonardis (a problem which Einstein certainly could not have solved), the class prepares a diabolical antic. A long tube constructed of rolled-up paper is passed to the back of the room to Berlouin, who urinates into it, its flow forming a puddle at the foot of the unsuspecting student at the board. When the math teacher discovers it, she cries out for the janitor and the young boy stares in confused disbelief.<sup>20</sup>

The body itself in Amarcord is thought of as such a powerful sensory temptation to life in this world and to ordinary being that the Church, in the form of Don Balossa the priest, must warn against the evil of even touching it. At confession he warns Titta that the other-worldly saints "cry when you touch yourself," and looking into the eyes of the same boy who had been the victim of the urination prank, he knows immediately he is "a toucher," as if it were the primal sin, all the while correcting another priest's flower-arranging in true anal-compulsive style and playing obsessively with his own repressed hands, like a character out of Nathanael West. But the students pay him no mind. They walk in procession behind Gradisca and her sisters on the Piazza delle Erbe, keeping time to the swaying motion of their hips; they fantasize "posterior intimacy" with the statue of "Winged Victory"; they attend the agricultural fair to watch the farm women mount their large hips suggestively on their bicycles; they even gather as a group to sit in a car in a garage and masturbate, fantasizing all the while about the various women of the town that each boy names as his special province-- Gradisca, the tobacconist, the math teacher, Aldina. (Their sexual energy even generates light, for as the camera pulls back we see that the headlights of the rocking auto are shining.)

The boys only mirror in their fantasies the adults of the town.

When the new prostitutes arrive, all eyes turn to watch. Even the effusively verbal, quasi-Hegelian philosophy teacher stops his dialectic long enough to train his full attention on them, as does the lawyer who seems, incidentally, to be just returning from a visit to the bordello. Moreover, Pinwheel's account of his orgy with the harem, Il Patacca and White Feather's lechery at the Grand Hotel ball, Grandfather's obsessional sexual memories, Gradisca's public-spirited giving of herself to the Prince, Volpina's nymphomania, all bear witness to the sexual fecundity alive in the town, thereby violating yet another bodily canon.

Even the bodily canon's tenet against protrusions is ignored: the large wart on Aurelio's head, the mammoth breasts of the tobacconist, the ample buttocks of the women at the agricultural fair, the darting tongues of Titta's young cousin at Miranda's funeral and of Volpina in her lust, the sagging, swaying belly of the obese man who walks along the pier on his way to the Rex, all break with the bodily canon's ridiculously idealistic conception of the human form's symmetry.

In a scene originally to be included in Amarcord but finally left out, the Contessa loses her diamond ring in a cesspool. A character named "Eau de Cologne" is called in to retrieve it. Submerged up to his armpits, he feels about in the pool for the diamond, which he never does find. The Count is repelled by the scene, but "Eau de Cologne" explains to him that he need not be, if he would only see things from his perspective:

For me there's no difference between a scent and a stink. Perhaps if we'd been taught that a stink is nice and a scent nasty, the world would see things in a different light. God knows why there's all this fuss about a bit of shit! It's a human product, just as much as our thoughts are! (pp. 36-36)

Eau de Cologne's wisdom is the wisdom as well of Fellini's eye. All the



functions of the body in its relations with the other elements and the image of the body itself (as shown best perhaps by the emergence of Aurelio nude from his bathtub after his encounter with the fascists, another sea creature, like the fish in La Dolce Vita, the whale in Satyricon, or Gasperino in Juliet), all are worthy of attention and acceptance.

In Angelo Solmi's Fellini (1967) is a marvelous photograph of a school classroom lined with uncomfortable bench desks at which the students sit obediently in pairs; and among them sits Fellini, looking rather disgusted. Fellini has always insisted that his films could be viewed as an attempt to free himself from the "useless baggage" laid upon him as a child in school (see above, p. 3), but it is with Amarcord that he most fully returns to his youth to exorcise the educational demons which perplex him. Consequently, Amarcord triumphantly celebrates as well the indefatigable energy of youth, its drive to live spontaneously, even in the face of those powers which seek to maintain the oblivion of Being and enforce the "bodily canon" in the next generation. The instinct for mimicry which the students exhibit on the hotel steps is ever present in Amarcord's youth, as it has been in all of Fellini's children.

Besides being almost constantly driven by sexual longings--their commitment to the "pleasure principle" is far too strong for the institutions of the town to abide--the youth of Amarcord are also inveterate pranksters; like the "little hands" of spring they drift and move in random ways which defy all the rational order which their elders attempt to impose upon them. As Olivetti, the lawyer, discourses on the history

of the Grand Hotel, freezing in his propositional verbal order the real being of this center of imagination, a baby strolls across the scene behind him, stealing the entire scene. The motion of the children of the film seems experimental and imaginative, a trying-out of all the possibilities of life beyond any fear of death, an Eros without Thanatos. Take, for example, the young boy at Teo's picnic who walks as if with definite purpose carrying a large rock toward a nearby basket, only to be stopped by his frantic mother just before the crying of a baby reveals to us that the child's experiment was to see what the effect might be of dropping a ten pound rock on a ten pound baby. Titta's young cousin shows no more of a regard for death at Miranda's funeral. As the carriage pulls away solemnly toward the cemetery, the small boy looks gaily and playfully about him, sticking out his tongue, gesturing with his fingers, and smiling, wildly happy. It Titta had heeded him at that moment, this youthful clown who knows no shadow, he would have received the message of the eternal regeneration of the world, of its perpetual youth, of its synergetic burst beyond all its winters. (This young cousin is not, incidentally, the only angelic clown present at the funeral, for as the carriage moves toward the cemetery and the camera views from inside the street on which it passes, a movie poster comes into sight on which are depicted none other than Laurel and Hardy, perhaps the classic example of the unity of White Clown and Auguste. The no-shadow message of the clown is everywhere.)

It is in Amarcord's third extended sequence, however, that the energy of youth is most fully celebrated, a section of the film centering on the Fourth Form students of the high school. When we first see them, they descend a long flight of steps in wild, spontaneous disorder, a descent which recalls, of course, the "coming down" of the

cast of 8 1/2 from the launch tower. They present a vivid contrast to the Fascist marchers who later ascend these very same steps. But when they reach the courtyard they fall into a regimented order, in compliance with Zeus, the headmaster's, scowl. This order, however, is merely a pragmatic concession, a social convention. It is not part of their real natures, and in the schoolroom scenes which follow, Fellini shows not the actual events which take place there, but rather what would be happening if the desires and imaginations of the students were allowed to remain free. There is a unity in Fellini's class, the kind of unity a revolutionary underground army might have when faced with their oppressors. The school and the church, here linked in one institution, are, according to Fellini, the primary perpetuating force behind the heresy of the ideal, the reconstructing of morality and perception according to the "ought," and in the classroom scenes of Amarcord, the still photograph in Solmi's book takes on motion and form: Fellini's imagination sits in a classroom and rebels against its repression.<sup>21</sup>

When the physics teacher holds up a pendulum and inquires what it is, Martoni replies, "An elephant's ball," and the class proceeds to rhythmically imitate the pendulum's swing back and forth. (This strange ability to move as a unit, not as the teachers would have them do in an assigned order, but freely, out of their own imaginings, in a sort of collective mimicry, appears again and again, in their fantasy of Winged Victory, in their promenade on the street, in their repetition of "perspective" in art class, in their dance upon the Grand Hotel steps, and, together with the town, in their gyrations at the Fulgor.) As the political science lecturer drones on about the glories of Italian fascism, seated in a mist (the Fascists are constantly

associated with obscurity of vision: their parade for example is nearly engulfed by a dust storm), it is certain that no one is listening. The classroom is nearly empty, and the only attention within it is Berlouin's determined pursuit of a fly. In philosophy class, their deranged instructor is so involved in his Hegelian discourse on the presence of an absolute unity of state and the church, that he wanders about the room, finally ending up talking to the wall in a rear corner. The class twist their bodies and crane their necks in unison to follow his movements, which seem to embody the abstruseness and unreality of his monologue. Father Balossa's lecture, this time on the son of God, is evidently not even worthy of attention: as his monotone fills the room, the camera cuts to the back of the class where we see a nearly empty classroom and several members tip-toeing away. Ovo looks anxiously over his shoulder at them as if to plead, "What are you doing?" but he clearly envies them and wishes that he, too, could join them. In Greek class, "Little Fanny's" attempt to solicit the correct pronunciation of emarpsamen from an elfish boy is answered by repeated raspberries when he cannot get the position of his tongue just right (he and the class are clearly putting him on, using him as the brunt of their jokes, a common occurrence, as indicated by his nickname). In these and the other classroom scenes I have already discussed, Fellini's youth show their reluctance to accept the "excess baggage" of their education.

They find the order the Fascists impose upon them no less palatable. Although they are all dressed alike and participate in uniform exercises to the commands of an exercise master, both the boys and girls show an inability or a distaste for the discipline they receive. Their timing is hopelessly off and their coordination no better than a junior high school

drill team. In the midst of it all, Francesco Martoni dreams of his marriage to Aldina, presided over by a giant head of Mussolini made of flowers. But Mussolini is only a head, like Steiner and Lichas and the portrait in the tobacconist's shop, and his power to control seems less than the power of these youth for spontaneity and regeneration.<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps one image of youth in Amarcord typifies best all the others. In the Teo sequence, while Grandfather and Teo have left the carriage to do their business by the road, Titta's younger brother Oliva has run off into a nearby field of tall grass. As the carriage is about to leave, his voice is heard calling out for his brother to join him, and for only a moment the camera lingers on him as he jumps up and down in the field, only now and then visible above the vegetation. Although his parents angrily call him back, he exists, for a moment at least in actuality, as all youth of Amarcord exist in their imaginations, in the innocent open which precedes the oblivion of Being.

Like the ephebes of the Greeks (and of Wallace Stevens' poetry), the youth of Amarcord are initiates into the Eleusinian mysteries of the renewal of the earth, the return of Kora/Persephone from Hades and the regeneration which ensues.<sup>23</sup> Like them they are bearers of the hieria through which the divine messages are conveyed, vehicles as they are of the flesh's Saying. It is Titta, after all, who first witnesses the second coming of the puffs. But like Amarcord's youth, both the mad and other mental defectives seem to possess as well an "openness to the mystery."

Like the children, the mad in Fellini's films seem, as I have already shown, to be "touched" by some power which others ignore.

They are Outside, either in the midst of the process of a Journey Out and Back or hopelessly lost while on that journey, unable to achieve any autochthony in the everyday. Uncle Teo, for example, urinates in his pants, so preoccupied is he with watching the horizon. But his vision is really very like Fellini's.

As the family rides along in the carriage from the asylum to the farm, Teo leans out over the side, staring in wonderment at the wheels as they go around. Later when Titta's mother asks him what he has in his pockets, he brings forth some rocks, ordinary smooth rocks, and pronounces them beautiful; for Teo sees in them a profound meaning, just as the fool did in La Strada. Aurelio and Miranda cast only suspicious glances at him. At the farm he is amazed by the shape of an egg; he is amazed at everything. All is for him numinous, to borrow Rudolf Otto's term.<sup>24</sup> As he looks at all the objects of his world, he shakes his head as if in disbelief: "How could such a thing be?" He seems perpetually preoccupied with Heidegger's great question, "Why is there anything and not rather nothing?"<sup>25</sup>

Teo is not the only such man of vision in Amarcord. I have shown already how the "village idiot" Giudizio heralds the puffs of spring and proclaims his sense of wonder at them. He serves too as the narrator when the town goes to sea; wondering aloud at the spectacle, he looks at the camera and inquires, "Where are they all going?" His attunement to the mysterious recalls the example of Gelsomina, an "idiot" (the word means literally "individual") from earlier in Fellini's career. A homologue of her, Giudizio possesses similar genius.

The world of Amarcord is also one in which this power of "vision" is central to the being of even a blind man, the irascible, literally "mad" man from Cantarel, the accordion player. Like the rest of the

town, he too journeys to witness the Rex, so glorious is the lure of the visible creation, and when it arrives, he rips off his dark glasses and staring at it questions, "What's it like?" There is no more moving image in all of Fellini's films than this: his presence captured within a visual art which is, in effect, the very contradiction of his being, the blind man's passion to see nevertheless need not be understood as tragic. The Saying of the Rex, an immense show of lights which is, in effect, only an extension of the stars at which Aurelio marvels, includes him somehow. For when he plays his music, and we heed it as he does so fully in his introspection, attentive to the light in a way which only he can be, we sense that he too has lived in the flesh.

Despite his frequently quoted admiration for the feminine, his testimony that his wife Giulietta Masina has led his imagination into otherwise unexplorable realms, Fellini once claimed that "In Italy we have water all around us. Water is a feminine thing. It is necessary to become free from these feminine things, from the power of the mother" (Ross, p. 68). It is essential to recall that in Italy even the Catholic religion is called the "Mother Church," and part of Fellini's anger here may well be directed toward it. But the statement is not all that unusual for a visionary artist; William Blake, for example, constantly denounced the world of "Generation" and found all pictures of the Madonna and child Jesus horrifying beyond words, for to him they depicted the young, vital imagination under the tyranny of the merely biological.<sup>26</sup> Fellini's declaration should I think be understood in a different light. And Amarcord shows the way to such an understanding.

As another "try for freedom" Amarcord achieves an escape from the mother whose quality Fellini could probably not conceptualize at the time of the Ross interview (1965), although he had imagined it in Juliet of the Spirits. The mother is escaped only in order to replace her with a far truer, holier, more all-encompassing and sustaining one, the one which has always been ignored in the West: the earth itself.<sup>27</sup> At the first lighting of the fogarazza the necessity for the burning of the "witch" is proclaimed, for without her death there could be no spring. And it is Gradisca, "Miss Springtime," who lights the first torch. The witch in that scene is of course winter, but later, when another spring arrives, it is Titta's mother who must die.

Titta's sexual activity, real or fantastic, receives special attention throughout Amarcord. He is the closest thing to a center this eccentric narrative possesses. At confession, we see his remembered flirtations with Gradisca, who is the prime subject of his longing. Although he finds it necessary to apologize to Gradisca on one occasion for staring at her, he nevertheless pursues her relentlessly until he receives a snowball in the face from her (a result of his own chivalric attempt to protect her), which he takes as a final rejection. But it with the tobacconist that he has his most bizarre encounter with the flesh.

Although an apparent sensualist, she is, in fact, anything but "earthy." She is a false mother. Early in the film she is shown lecturing her father on not staying up too late during the festival, a conservatism to which he strongly objects. Titta can break through her cold, hard exterior only by lifting her from the earth. A reverse Antaeus, her immense potential as a mother can only be released, paradoxically, by the breaking of contact with the earth. And Titta is



sickened by his contact with her, for she can give him nothing. He remains in her presence a child in short pants. When later Titta's own mother dies, he will not be rejuvenated by any other "mother" like the tobacconist; he will instead, in that "sweetest interval" between the passing winter and death of his mother and the coming regeneration of the town, be nursed not by her mammoth breasts, or by Gradisca, who is little more than a symbol to him, but by the Saying of the "little hands" which come to him on the pier. For he has become a man and begun his journey, as his mother herself observes during Titta's visit with her in the hospital, made so by his mother's dying.

Like the Fascists and the teachers, the tobacconist is a reminder within the Open of the oblivion of Being. This is graphically shown by the strange painting on the wall of her shop, a Bosch-like portrait of a man with the top of his head missing from the forehead up and what looks to be his steaming brain exposed to view. This picture identifies the tobacconist's relationship in Fellini's imagination to other perpetrators of the oblivion of Being in his films, also identified with the head in some way--Steiner in La Dolce Vita, who shoots himself in the head, and Lichas, another seeming sensualist, who is beheaded in Fellini-Satyricon.

Titta's own mother Miranda is a truer mother. She nurses Titta back to health after his encounter with the tobacconist; she sides with the children against their father's wrath; she tenderly cares for Aurelio in the aftermath of his ordeal with the Fascists; she is even known all over the town for her kindness: when she is in the hospital suffering inside from an illness which counterpoints the winter outside, a dwarf in front of the church asks Titta about her condition and comments, "Nice lady, your mother, very nice. Gave me a bowl of soup

once, glass of wine. Very nice." Her death and funeral understandably bring Titta's world nearly to a stop, but while in mourning he walks to the pier and becomes the first herald of the coming spring, heeding the Saying of the manine. His mother's death necessitates his own future requisite prodigality. His journey has begun. (Appropriately, given her central function in the generation of Fellini's cinematic narrative, Miranda in death becomes part of a movie pantheon. The plaque which commemorates her can be seen during the funeral procession as part of the same wall of the town on which movie posters similarly pay tribute to the likes of Norma Shearer and Laurel and Hardy.) But this commencement of prodigality is not the only one in the film. The marriage of Gradisca initiates her prodigality as well, and the very coming of spring shows the inception of the most essential prodigality of all.

A wedding follows the coming of spring in which Miss Springtime herself, Gradisca, marries a carabiniere, or policeman, from southern Italy. He has not been seen before, nor is the marriage in any way prepared for or explained anywhere else in the film. The leap of Gradisca into marriage is a quantum leap, as inexplicable as the quantum leap of spring itself. Amarcord shows their wedding party, in the open, on several covered tables near the sea. There, the boys entertain, doing a skit in drag, and the blind accordion player performs. Toasts are offered. Rain starts to fall, but undaunted, someone recites an old superstition: "Rain when you're wed, sunshine 'til you're dead," and the rain stops as soon as it begins. Gradisca and her "Gary Cooper" depart to the right of the screen along "la strada" which remains in view (the wedding bouquet, tossed by Gradisca forgetfully at the last moment, is grabbed by the same girl who had earlier been the recipient

of Berlouin's frog), and as the movie comes to an end, the camera pans back slowly toward the wedding pavilion and the sea beyond, a feminine thing now no longer threatening, which can be distantly heard in the background; the wind blows noisily, the blind man of Cantarel plays, and a dog wanders about.

The scene is stunningly simple. With its homely imagery surrounded by the wide expanse of the elements, it creates an effect strikingly similar to the "one corner style" of Oriental art, releasing imagination and calming the mind by leaving a large area of space uncluttered and unorganized, thereby imaging the ground which encompasses the figures as sunyata and not as void.<sup>28</sup> The quality of the image is reminiscent of the similar settings of so many Fellini films: the beaches at the end of La Dolce Vita and Fellini-Satyricon, Juliet's peaceful garden, the open circus ring of The Clowns. It is the perfect evocation of his eccentricity.

With the local now redeemed by imagination's discovery of it, it becomes like the scene envisioned by Wallace Stevens in "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction" (see the epigraph to this chapter), in which "merely going round is a final good,/The way wine comes at a table in a wood" (or near the sea?). This vision is eccentric, that is, ordinary, and reveals, as Stevens understood, that it is the vision of the true human hero, or knight of faith, who has become not the "exceptional monster," which the oblivion of Being requires, but "he that of repetition is most master." With Amarcord, Fellini becomes fully such a hero, what Stevens elsewhere calls a "major man," a character

beyond  
Reality, composed thereof. (CP, p. 335)

But this is a wedding banquet, and in previous Fellini films

marriage has been a veritable image of hell. In Nights of Cabiria, for example, it was the occasion only for theft; in 8 1/2 it seemed to be a tremendous restraint imposed upon the creativity of the artist; and in Juliet of the Spirits, it stifled Juliet's essential self-discovery. But with Amarcord Fellini seems to have made his peace with marriage. Like everything else in Amarcord, this marriage is only an image of everydayness, another eternally recurrent event which his imagination now merely lets be without judgment.<sup>29</sup> On the excursion to see the Rex Gradisca had earlier lamented to an uncomprehending audience that her greatest fear in life was that the immense love she contained within her beautiful external image would go unwanted. But Fellini answers her plea: it is as much his imagination which marries with her potential as the carabiniere, and by so doing, he has married the Inside and the Outside. By giving her over to the ordinary, to the human dream of "they lived happily ever after," he has recognized within her and within himself that they are "knights of faith" and has come consequently fully to dwell, after his extensive exploration of the Outside and the foreign, as a prodigal son in the true autochthony of what Yeats called "the desolation of reality."<sup>30</sup> On a sign which stands behind the banquet tables in the scene, overlooked by most who view the film, Fellini says almost blatantly how we are to understand the quality of this scene and the locale in which his imagination has come to reside. The sign reads simply: "Il Paradísio."<sup>31</sup>

Fittingly, Gradisca and her husband depart (according to the book of Amarcord, for Battipaglia). Before her departure, Giudizio begins to sing for her a song, which in the movie is not completely translated in the subtitles, but which does, however, appear in its entirety in the book:

Though there's many a charming town  
 And the world abounds with beauty,  
 At evening when the sun goes down  
 And finds you in some far-off place  
 Sitting at a stranger's hearth,  
 The Borgo in your heart will seem  
 The loveliest place on earth.  
 Oh, how will you live, so far from home? (p. 141)

Like Fellini, Gradisca, too, is to be a prodigal; eternal recurrence requires it as much of her as it does of Amarcord's rebellious students, whose unrest and "infinite yearning" are the seeds of their own coming prodigality. But she takes with her on the way the promise of the companionship of the light ("sunshine 'til you're dead"), the one constant which accompanies all prodigals and summons their return.

As a celebration of that light, Amarcord owes its very existence to its elemental incarnation: spring. Spring's arrival sets the film in motion, and its prodigal return signals its close. Although it announces itself fully only after Miranda's funeral, it is prefigured in a somewhat earlier scene. After a record snowfall has engulfed the town and filled the screen with primordial whiteness, a snowball fight breaks out among the inhabitants of the Borgo. Earlier they had exited en masse from the Fulgor to witness a spectacle greater than the movies. Now they turn from their games in the snow to witness a still greater spectacle. The Count's peacock is heard crying overhead and all ears heed it; it lands in the square and all turn to view it. It spreads its tail, the spectacle of its display filling the screen. The gesture is biologically a technique for seduction, and so it is here as well. The iridescence of its plumage hints of the coming of the little hands and their attendant birth of radiant color and new life in the flesh of spring. The elemental evidence the bird presents is a Saying beyond all artifice.<sup>32</sup> It seduces us into mimicry of it and its world.

In "Asphodel that Greeny Flower" William Carlos Williams captures as well this same metamorphosis in the making. Watching the approaching storm, the poet proclaims,

Inseparable from the fire  
its light  
takes precedence over it.  
.....

In the huge gap  
between the flash  
and the thunderstroke  
spring has come in. . . . (PB, p. 178)

The Count's peacock and the puffs are Fellini's lightning; the death of Miranda and winter are his thunderstroke, but he shares the same vision with Williams: that art is a mimicry of the light and all its multifarious Saying, its heuristic potential, a celebration of its constancy and eternal regeneration, the imagining from out of its Being everything that is, and in its final phases at least, local.

At the end of Amarcord, as the wedding banquet breaks up, Pinwheel, the town's notorious liar and teller of tales, walks from the tables toward the camera and announces, face-to-face, in a joyous voice, "That's all. Goodbye."<sup>33</sup> In this self-referential moment, Fellini's Saying reaches its quintessence. But it is the film's very last image which gives a clue as to the antecedent of Pinwheel's pronoun "that" and enables us to sense the Saying of this finale: it is a simple title, bearing the words "Fellini's Amarcord" (and the translation "I remember") on a blue background. But to Fellini it means much more; as he has explained, it suggests, "I remember but I remain, I do not go to the moments, the moments come to me with a judgment and a tenderness" (Murray, p. 214). What is over then is Fellini's remembering, the saga of the town is complete, spring having given birth to another spring. But Pinwheel's announcement may signify much more.

If with Amarcord, as I have shown, Fellini has returned from his journey out to discover that mountains are mountains after all and a town is a town and the past is the past, if he has with this film remembered himself into the ordinary, the local, Being and the flesh, Stevens' "merely going round," the "final good," realizing in this eccentric saga the sort of total acceptance and agreement with life he long ago described Guido as achieving, then Pinwheel's announcement may be an imaginative echo, a shock of recognition, over the centuries of Prospero's dismissal of his creations in The Tempest. If the circuit is complete, might it not be time to retire to Stratford?<sup>34</sup>

<sup>1</sup>See Nancy Wilson Ross's discussion of these aspects in Three Ways of Asian Wisdom (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966), pp. 159-176, and Chang Chung-yuan, Creativity and Taoism (New York: Harper and Row, 1963).

<sup>2</sup>Watts, pp. 45, 77, 88, 127.

<sup>3</sup>See Pirsig, pp. 320-22 on Mu, and on koans, Watts, pp. 154-173 and Paul Reys, ed. Zen Flesh, Zen Bones (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., n.d.), pp. 83-129. For a discussion of iki, see Appendix V.

<sup>4</sup>"Aesthetic" was derived originally from aistheton and meant something like "that which is worthy of perception by the senses alone" (that is, without imposition of the ought); see OWL, p. 14.

<sup>5</sup>Pictures from Brueghel (New York: New Directions, 1962), p. 153. All future references to this work will be cited in the text.

<sup>6</sup>Miller writes: "Yeats, Thomas, Stevens, and Williams have gradually developed a poetry beyond subjectivism and dualism . . . Williams goes farthest. He begins within the space of immanence and his work is a magnificent uncovering of its riches" (p. 358). This is a result of the attempt made by Williams' poetry to "maintain for as long as possible the moment when new life appears from the ground . . ." as it does in the "sweetest interval" in "Asphodel" (p. 353). I owe my understanding of "Asphodel," and for that matter, of Williams' work as a whole, to Miller's reading of him.

<sup>7</sup>It is the same light of which Merleau-Ponty has written: "the light that is not something seen but is that with which, or according to which, one sees; what inaugurates vision of things is the elemental

alliance with the invisible light"; Phenomenology of Perception, Trans. Colin Smith (New York: Humanities Press, 1962), p. 315.

<sup>8</sup>The Inverted Bell (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), pp. 330-31. Williams insisted as early as Kora in Hell that the true genius of the imagination was to "nick the solidity of apparition," for it is virtually impossible to lift before the imagination "those things which lie under the direct scrutiny of the senses, close to the nose." The senses tend to witness "what is immediately before them" as "finality which they cling to in despair . . ."; Imaginations (New York: New Directions, 1970), p. 14.

<sup>9</sup>Riddell, p. 18.

<sup>10</sup>In his Sense of an Ending (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), Frank Kermode has likened the relationship of meaning to time in Western narrative to the imposition of the interval between tick and tock on the ordinary passage of time. Tick, for Kermode, is a genesis; tock, an apocalypse, a sense of an ending. Plot simply cannot function without the expectation of tock, he insists, the end which will "bestow on the whole duration and meaning." Tock-tick, on the other hand, he likens to the formless ground of experience; it is the "purely successive, disorganized time of the sort that we need to humanize." Williams' "sweetest interval" calls into question this whole distinction. By capturing the ground from which all life and indeed all narration spring and by naming it "light," Williams has fused the ceaseless forward motion of the tick-tock with the simple being of the tock-tick. As a "celebration of the light," a movie like Amarcord no longer needs an ending to sustain it in any traditional sense (pp. 44-46).

<sup>11</sup>When a recent Fellini critic Stuart Rosenthal (The Cinema of Federico Fellini, pp. 37, 136, 169, 170), in his discussion of Amarcord, refers to the "empty lives" of the inhabitants of the Borgo and claims that they "inspire no love in us": when he insists that they go to sea to see the Rex only as a willful pursuit of illusion; when he sees the midget nun as an image that seems "unbalanced and threatening"; and the entire film as "hostile satire," he convinces us only of his inability to see Amarcord's direct pointing and of his predisposition to idealistic glossing. Where does Rosenthal stand to achieve such condescension? Certainly not in the world. Fellini's art often seems to be a mirror in which a man who knows only the oblivion of Being can see only the oblivion of Being.

<sup>12</sup>For example, see Vincent Canby, "Fellini Again at the Top of His Form," New York Times, 20 Sept. 1974, p. 32:1; the film won an Oscar for best foreign language film.

<sup>13</sup>My understanding here of the word "local" in relation to the imagination is drawn from Riddell, pp. 11-12. He, in turn, has based his analysis of its meaning to Williams on Heidegger.

<sup>14</sup>The phrase is Heidegger's, from "Memorial Address" in Discourse on Thinking, p. 55.



<sup>15</sup> Federico Fellini and Tonino Guerra, Amarcord: Portrait of a Town, Trans. Nina Rootes (New York: Berkeley Windhover Books, 1974), p. 85. All future references to this work will be cited in the text.

<sup>16</sup> All the characters of Amarcord seem to have a great propensity for narrative. In the novelization of the film is a scene which makes apparent how this comes about (it was never filmed). A water-spout strikes the town and a severe dust-storm results. Biscein (Pinwheel), sitting in the barber-chair, watches the scene and immediately imagines a tall tale which he will tell about what happened:

Biscein's eyes are drawn to a boat streaking over the cobble-stones as if swept along by the irresistible current of a river. Is it true? Is it his imagination? Already he seems to hear his own voice telling what happened: "Word of honour, a boat! Right there in the piazza, and there was a gentleman from Ancona inside! I left the barber's and. . . (p. 109) Pinwheel is the town's most notorious liar, but given Fellini's own reputation, it seems justifiable to view him as a prototype of the artist himself.

<sup>17</sup> Balazs, pp. 54-55; 83-84.

<sup>18</sup> From "Large Red Man Reading," CP, p. 423.

<sup>19</sup> Bakhtin has gone so far as to claim that:  
Dung and urine lend a bodily character to matter, to the world, to the cosmic elements, which become closer, more intimate, more easily grasped, for this is the matter, the elemental force, born from the body itself. It transforms cosmic terror into a gay carnival monster. (p. 335)

<sup>20</sup> Again Fellini's "note-taking" has here fueled his imagination. This stunt was certainly not the product of a Fellinian fantasy; clearly he saw it done. It is described in the folklore of the small Pennsylvania high school which I attended. The phenomenological study of the fart in Fellini's imagination which I proposed earlier might well be extended to include such a scene as this. The problem of suppressed gas or of the mysterious puddle have probably not been handled in art with due respect. Only artists like Fellini, enraptured by the ordinary, heed their un-repressed being.

<sup>21</sup> Woody Allen has mirrored this imaginative approach to memory in Annie Hall, in which he actually does repossess his old classroom seat.

<sup>22</sup> It is significant to note that for Fellini, Mussolini is an Auguste clown (Hitler being of course a White clown). See "Why Clowns?" Strich, p. 130.

<sup>23</sup> See New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology (New York: Hamlyn, 1968), pp. 153-155. As Riddel points out, the Kora myth and not the Orphic was central to Williams' art, for it "certifies the eternal return, the recovery of plenitude" (p. 5). The same might be said of Fellini.

<sup>24</sup>See Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy (1923; rpt. New York: Oxford, 1950).

<sup>25</sup>This question is posed at the outset of An Introduction to Metaphysics, p. 2.

<sup>26</sup>See Northrup Frye, Fearful Symmetry: a Study of William Blake (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), pp. 75, 87-99.

<sup>27</sup>That the earth was left out, Joseph Campbell has observed, is somewhat of a historical accident. The Judeo-Christian tradition elevated its tribal deity above its nature divinity, making its theology at its very basis culturally exclusive, social, and untranslatable back into natural terms; Sam Keen, Voices and Visions (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), p. 76. The American Indian, who had never entered such oblivion of Being, noticed the discrepancy immediately, inquiring often of early missionaries who attempted to explain the Trinity, "But where is the Mother?" ("Lessons from the Indian Soul: an Interview with Frank Waters," Psychology Today, May 1973, p. 68).

<sup>28</sup>Sunyata is a very difficult term in Zen Buddhist thought, coined by Nagarjuna, and meaning something like "the quality of the void (Sunya) which makes it appear to be full."

<sup>29</sup>Critics like Rosenthal of course must judge. To him, her marriage is the beginning of a "thoroughly unglamorous existence" based on illusion, "the end of a dream" (p. 167-68).

<sup>30</sup>"Meru," Collected Poetry, p. 287.

<sup>31</sup>It is interesting to note a similar depiction of marriage in Stevens' "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," CP, p. 401:

The great Captain loved the ever-hill Catawba  
And therefore married Bawda, whom he found there,  
And Bawda loved the captain as she loved the sun.

They married well because the marriage-place  
Was what they loved.

<sup>32</sup>It is interesting to note that in his recent The Sovereign Ghost (which presents an argument for considering imagination again as a mysterious working of genius), Denis Donoghue cites as his essential example of the gratuitous grace which the imagination bequeaths just this scene, calling it a "gratifying presence, when absence is feared" which grants to us "felicity" when we least expect it, inviting our hearkening after it (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 10-11.

<sup>33</sup>This announcement recalls the "almost ending" of The Clowns where Fellini's interfering voice ("It's over. Turn it off") nearly prevents the unification of White and Auguste. But here the adieu seems timely.

<sup>34</sup>I cannot resist the temptation to observe that the name of Titta's mother, Miranda, recalls that of Prospero's daughter, and that Amarcord is a "New World" release. That Fellini might be viewed by the future

as the Shakespeare of film is not impossible; although he is an artist in a medium less than a century old, he might well be one of its masters. For Shakespeare, it should be remembered, worked in the same respective early period of the age of print media.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE OPEN

We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time. . . .  
When the last of earth left to discover  
Is that which was the beginning:  
At the source of the longest river  
The voice of the hidden waterfall  
And the children in the apple-tree  
Not known, because not looked for  
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness  
Between two waves of the sea.  
Quick now, here, now, always--  
A condition of complete simplicity  
(Costing not less than everything)

T. S. Eliot, "Little Gidding"

Are there then trees, frequented by angels,  
and so strangely reared by slow occult gardeners  
that they bear for us without belonging to us?

Rainer Maria Rilke

In Amarcord, during an early sequence depicting the typical night-life along the Corso Principale, a smiling, emotion-filled woman exits from the Fulgor, passes through a crowd of people including the theatre's owner, "Ronald Coleman," and meeting the camera face-to-face, proclaims, "What a movie! I cried and cried!" Like Pinwheel's final "That's all. Goodbye!" at the movie's close, the moment is self-referential. The movie she speaks of is really Amarcord, just as Pinwheel's "That" refers to the film in which he speaks it. Since 8 1/2 Fellini's art has, after all, been largely about the state of Fellini's

art, the ways of the flesh in his films serving as guideposts against which can be measured the progress of his own imaginative journey. If Amarcord is as I have suggested the completion of that journey, the return of the prodigal son, then any tears shed over it are ones of victory and not of defeat. When in Amarcord the Rex passes in the night before the expectant townspeople, it solicits tears from many, particularly Gradisca, at the very sight of its spectacle. As spectacle, Amarcord summons tears in the same way, for it is the kind of spectacle which Bazin had envisioned the movies as capable of producing: one which redirects attention to the greater spectacle of life itself. The pathos of Amarcord's re-membering then is generated by the emergence of Fellini's imagination, after a long following of the way marked out only by what Gerry Trudeau calls the "bread crumbs" of non-ordinary reality, into the Open.<sup>1</sup> Fellini has insisted that he has always been making the same film, a search for a "more authentic source of life" and for himself freed. Amarcord may well be the completion of that film, the attainment of that place which this hermeneutic has sought to discover.

It is, as opposed to a film like La Dolce Vita, quite provincial (at the end of La Dolce Vita remember Marcello turns his back on Paola, the girl from the provinces), just as William Carlos Williams was, compared to Ezra Pound or T. S. Eliot, a provincial poet.<sup>2</sup> But the provincial, as Fellini himself has proclaimed, is the essential element in all art. All artists, he writes, must be provincials,

standing between a physical and a metaphysical reality. Faced with a metaphysical reality, we are all provincials. Who then is a citizen of the transcendent world? . . . the saints. But it is the no-man's land that I call provincial, the frontier between the world of the senses and the supersensible world, that is truly the artist's kingdom. (Strich, p. 154)

Taking its very form from the eternal recurrence of the seasons, Amarcord dwells in this "no-man's land." As an act of mimicry, Amarcord's province is an earth which is not man's.<sup>3</sup> In an essay he wrote on his home town, Fellini suggested that "what needs to be taken from one's home and background is the original element, without any deceptions" (Strich, p. 6). Amarcord, by being faithful to the earth, achieves precisely this feat. In it, Fellini has heeded the message of his angel.

Fellini's angel, it will be remembered, always called upon him to "wait," remaining behind while he himself moved on, a hunter thrusting farther on into the distance, like the motorcycles at the end of Roma.<sup>4</sup> Once an embodiment of his youthful imagination and then a representation of "a vital moral need," this angel, Fellini tells us, always awoke him from his "spiritual torpor" and was in effect the source of his creativity. In Amarcord's "I remember" Fellini returns along the way of his journey into the distance to the angel's own place of habitation and answers its cry of "wait." It is the "angel of reality" that Fellini, like Wallace Stevens, heeds, the "necessary angel," necessary in the same way that the seasons are necessary, and it enables him to discover the earth again, to see as Stevens did that "There is, in fact, a world of poetry indistinguishable from the world in which we live, or I ought to say, no doubt, from the world in which we shall come to live" (NA, p. 31). The vision of the "necessary angel" is of the earth allowed to remain, as Heidegger would say, still "self-secluding," in its stubborn refusal still a mystery, always the "Fat girl" found "in difference."

Heidegger has suggested that what men have called gods should more properly be designated as angels. They are the heralds of what he calls the "serene," which he thinks of as "angelic light" which it is the

purpose of poetry to capture.<sup>5</sup> The serene, as Heidegger imagines it, is the light which shines in the Open, the source of illumination in the clearing. Bathed in this light, Heidegger would suggest, men would feel autochthony. But what is this light? All that I have written here is an attempt to answer that very question, to provide a de-mythologized explanation of the nature of this light, the angel which transmits it, and its relation to human creativity. I have named this light the more than rational distortion when it summons the work of mimicry of the human imagination by impressing its way, its Saying, upon the routes of the embodied human eye, the "iris frettings on the blank." I have argued that this more than rational distortion appears as an iridescence; it shines through the dissonance between the raw flesh and the imposed ought and hints of the light of the serene from which it springs, the original "vulgate of experience" (Stevens, CP, p. 465). I have tried to show how the world as we know it is made, "poeticized," out of our heeding of this angel's promptings, since in the original "one windy nothing"<sup>6</sup> there was nothing but light which, as Condillac has observed, we were. William Carlos Williams once wrote that "It is the white light which is the background of all good works."<sup>7</sup> This is no merely figurative statement. As background, the white light is the source of all fictions, which are acts of clearing, and the serene which lights the Open is the product of those fictions, the working of it, its mimicry.<sup>8</sup>

To surrender oneself to this serenity is to find what Heidegger called "releasement." Releasement is the discovery that there is nothing to discover. It is a remaining faithful to the originating element (Heidegger calls it "that-which-regions") because "insofar as he originally belonged to it" and is always, whether man acknowledges

it or not, "appropriated" by it, he is its "trustee."<sup>9</sup> When in the ninth Duino elegy Rilke achieves affirmation of "supernumerous existence" he realizes this final equivalence, that the angel to which he has been addressing his poetry is in fact the earth and needs him for its work; he turns to her in the face-to-face of poetry, apostrophe, to confirm his understanding:

Is it not your dream  
to be one day invisible? Earth! Invisible!  
What is your urgent command, if not transformation?  
Earth, you darling, I will! Oh, believe me, you need  
your Springs no longer to win me: a single one,  
just one, is already more than my blood can endure. (DE, p. 77)

Amarcord and the movies of Federico Fellini Say too "I will" to the work of transformation and present an inhuman allegiance. "You must feel that all is sacred, that all is necessary, that all is useful, that all goes well," Fellini has said. "I can't understand an artist who seeks to show life as sterile and doomed, that we are alone and abandoned, that there is nothing left. If you deny everything, then you deny art itself, so why create it?" (Playboy, p. 66). Antonioni (in whose most recent film a story is told of a formerly blind man who kills himself after regaining his sight because of the inherent ugliness of the world<sup>10</sup>) calls this attitude Fellini's Catholic "nostalgia" (Murray, p. 235). But is it not rather a realization on Fellini's part, like that of his characters Guido and Juliet, that experience is angelic? To Fellini, life is the angel of art, as he explained to Lilian Ross: "Everything is part of my preparation to make a picture. And everybody who comes to you brings to you a message" (Ross, p. 78). As Carla realizes in 8 1/2's triumphant last scene, the saying of Federico Fellini is very simple. With her, it would be wise to see that Fellini is trying to say that he can't live without us, without his world.



And art, as mimicry (what Rilke liked to think of as a process of making the earth invisible by eliminating man's standing over-against it, his self-conscious observation of it) is the angel of the earth. For within art is at work what Rilke called a "hidden growth,"<sup>11</sup> producing "pure physical fruit," that is, a yield or harvest which, as Rilke suggests (in Sonnets to Orpheus, II, 17, P. 103; see epigraph to this chapter), does not belong to us, is not a product of our will or our reason. In the terms I have presented here, the Journey Out and Back is such a hidden growth in an artist's work, and the fruit which it bears is the Open.

The magic words of Guido Anselmi's childhood in 8 1/2, "Asa Nisi Masa," had been a premature attempt on the behalf of Fellini's imagination to open the Open. But as Heidegger labored to show, the Open can be attained by no act of will or magic sesame, for Openness is "that for which we could do nothing but wait" ("CCP," p. 68).<sup>12</sup> Open freedom, at least as Heidegger has explained it, is not attainable by individual effort; it is not won, as the traditional views would have us believe. The Open claims us, "appropriates us"; it is "let in." To will, to search, to be an active discoverer, as Fellini visibly is in The Clowns and Roma, is to place oneself in opposition to the way of the earth, to what Heidegger calls the "pure draft," and the early Greeks physis. The epiphanies which it brings to man are not bold and blatant; they are shy, and the discoverer must wait upon their revelations. They cannot simply be "had." They require from their discoverer unshieldedness.

Unshieldedness, Heidegger insists, is always what is threatening us. Like a crab finding itself alone on a wide open stretch of sand, we seek cover, protection from the elements. But man, empowered by his

rationality with a more than natural strength, engineers for himself a protection against his naked unshieldedness far stranger than any hole or nest; he builds the oblivion of Being, a refuge in the ought, outside of the flesh. But even there unshieldedness threatens him. Our parting against the "pure draft" frightens us with the possibility of not belonging to the Open. It is here that the vast work of conversion which I have called mimicry takes place: it is here that our unshieldedness inverts our betrayal of the Open, turning our way toward it and into it, becoming it (PLT, pp. 121-22).

During the garden party near the end of Juliet of the Spirits, Juliet walks off through the pine woods with Dr. Miller, the American psychiatrist, who proclaims that she understands Juliet's problem. To make clear her understanding she calls attention to the surrounding trees which, as I have already shown, function so prominently in the film; she invites Juliet to become a knight of faith:

These ancient trees are the most impressive symbol of this way of life. They are deeply, securely rooted. Up there their branches spread open in all directions. Yet they grow spontaneously. This is a great simple secret to learn--to fulfill yourself spontaneously, yet without putting yourself in conflict with your desires, your passions. Don't you feel how fine it is here? . . . Look at the sun shining through the branches. Everything is peaceful, serene. . . . What are you afraid of? May I answer? You're afraid of being alone, of being abandoned. . . . And yet you want nothing more than to be left alone; . . . Without Giorgio you'll start to breathe, to live, to become yourself. You think you're afraid. Actually you fear only one thing--to be happy. (pp. 300-301; my italics)

That Juliet's final victory walk guided by her "true friends" is among those same angelic trees which Dr. Miller uses in her direct pointing shows that she has listened. Unshielded, clothed only in a nightgown and robe, as she moves about in her garden at the movie's close, she seems no longer afraid to be happy. Always the smallest creature in her world, she is in the last image of the film, a medium long shot of the

pine woods and the sea beyond, only barely discernible; for she has in her unshieldedness and her happiness found a refuge in the earth, not in any hiding place, but in open mimicry of it.

The Open in which Juliet comes to dwell and the imagination of Amarcord inhabits is what Heidegger calls a region, affixing, as he always does, his own special meaning to the word. As a region, the Open

gathers, just as if nothing were happening, each to each and each to all into an abiding, while resting in itself. Regioning is a gathering and re-sheltering for an expanded resting in an abiding. ("CCP," p. 66; my italics)<sup>14</sup>

As a place of abiding, the Open is not devoid of activity; what takes place there is an "expanded resting" in which it first appears "as if" nothing moves. But this is because within the Open all beings are autochthonous, secure and trusting (the word "abide" is derived from words meaning to trust and to follow) in their power derived from being at home. In this "enchanted region" "everything belonging there returns to that in which it rests" ("CCP," p. 65). Such resting is "expanded" for it is part of activity, not its opposite, the "seat and reign of all movement" ("CCP," p. 67). Movement in the Open is not, as it is at the end of Roma, acceleration, for such movement is unfaithful to the essentially feminine ways of the earth's flesh; it is male. Abiding is not Faustian, needing more and more space and more and more newness. To understand the activity present in abiding is, as Norman O. Brown has suggested, given our predisposition for Faustian pursuits, nearly impossible; for "we cannot imagine 'rest,' 'Nirvana,' 'eternity,' except as a cessation of all activity--in other words, as death." What is needed, Brown suggests, is "to sustain the possibility of activity (life) which is also at rest."<sup>15</sup>

The age-old problem of being and becoming becomes in the Open a pseudo-problem. As Heidegger has explained,

From the standpoint of evaluating thought, which always starts from something permanent, becoming appears as impermanence. In the realm of the already there, impermanence is manifested primarily as not remaining in the same place. Becoming is seen as change of place, phora, transposition. (IM, p. 163)

For rationalism, becoming becomes only motion; consequently thinking's needs take on the quality of motion, borrowing one of motion's chief powers, acceleration. The oblivion of Being as I have described it here is an acceleration, a prodigality. But if there is not, and never has been, a fixed place on which to stand, a definitive gloss or description such as rationality has sought to provide since the Renaissance, then becoming is not impermanent; Being is becoming. Being is a way, a way within the flesh. To discover that there is nothing to discover then need not be the end of discovery; it is only the end of an over-reaching preoccupation with discovery: it is discovery become second nature, tacit.

That the movies came to be called the "movies" is not a historical accident. The name gradually obliterated earlier names, such as the "bioscope," because the unfolding which they capture was immediately metaphorized as motion, acceleration. But since they do not really move, but approximate rather our and every other creature's diastole and systole of exchange with the earth as part of their very possibility, are they not more truthfully the very image of Being, its mimicry?

The purpose of the poet, Heidegger wrote, is to call or summon

in the sight of the sky, that which in its very self-disclosure causes the appearance of that which conceals itself, and indeed as that which conceals itself. In the familiar appearances, the poet calls the alien as that to which the invisible imparts itself in order to remain what it is--unknown. (PLT, p. 225)

Otherwise there could be no wonder. The Open is always "Openness to the mystery." What Heidegger has described here as the function of the poet is the function of the filmmaker as well, except that his evocation of the familiar, of the ways of the flesh, is a tracing of those ways more in the image of them than is the poet's and his summoning of "that which conceals itself," the "unknown," what Roger Munier called the "cosmophonic" "pre-face" of the world, is immensely more spectacular and fascinating. Within the movies there is no permanence from which to judge becoming, as there is in calculative thinking; as a thinking about the world, movies are rather a thanking, for they say becoming, offer it up to our mimicry. Within their very nature as a medium they are an image of all evolution, as W. R. Robinson has observed, the white light which leaves the projector becoming before our eyes the play of colors and form.<sup>17</sup> They depend for their very being on the inhuman mystery.

All truly human work, Heidegger observes, strives for reliability, for the subsistence of the being of a thing in a thing: a pair of well made shoes (as in the Van Gogh painting he so brilliantly analyzes in "The Origin of a Work of Art," PLT, p. 34), for example, is a working of the earth's materials so as to establish it as an object to be trusted. But in order for a work to be reliable and, therefore, serviceable, the process of creation must set "back into the earth" the "conflict, as rift" (man's division from the "pure draft," his call to care and concern, the source of all that is human, his fall) so that "earth itself" can serve as "the self-closing factor" (PLT, p. 64). For only then can the work become reliable, "dismissed beyond itself, to be used up in serviceability." As human work the movies are certainly no different. In them especially, earth is the "self-closing factor," for

in such works as those of Federico Fellini, culminating in Amarcord's celebration of the reliability of the four seasons, the earth begins to come round to meet man face-to-face, a meeting which might humble man into trust in hidden growth.

In a memorable scene in Amarcord the audience at the Fulgor is shown so deeply involved in the film on the screen, which, judging from the native drums and animal noises on the soundtrack, must be a jungle movie of some kind, that they move in unison to the drum beat and growl together, imitating a lion on the screen. But then a man rushes in and announces excitedly to the audience that it is snowing outside. Immediately all hurry for the exits, quickly forgetting the medium to experience immediately that always extraordinary first snow of the winter. Earlier in Roma it seemed as if nothing could break the rapt attention of the viewers in Fellini's home town to the gladiator epic on the screen. But here in Amarcord life has become a more seductive spectacle.

Wallace Stevens once explained in his Adagia that the purpose of poetry is, quite simply, "to make life complete in itself" (OP, p. 162). This scene from Amarcord would seem to hint that the process might be coming to a kind of fruition in the work of Fellini and perhaps in the poetry of the movies in general. Fellini has himself predicted as much. He suggested to Lilian Ross, for example, that "Maybe we are entering a stage of life in which art will consist only of the art of living" (Ross, p. 66). He has observed as well that the artist no longer seems to stand out as a being highly evolved beyond his fellow men and speculates that

Perhaps we are destined to become a whole human race of artists, each producing and nourishing himself on what he produces. Perhaps art, in the sense we know it, will no

longer be necessary. These are utopian ideas, of course, but one thing we ought to bear in mind. We tend to say that men are the same and will always be the same, but what we really know about men goes back only 10,000 years. If you consider that the human race is millions of years old and will go on for as many million more, then every judgment, every assertion, and every forecast is lost in the mists of time. (Strich, p. 156)

Biologically, man is by classification a hunter and a predator, and the vision of hunters is always characterized by certain traits. The eyes of a hunter are in front; he is concerned with the focal, objective target of his searching and prone to being lost in the immensity of the distance which always seems to lie before him like a confrontation and a challenge. He is virtually unaware, as the less evolved hunted animals are not, due to the nature of their vision and its demands, of the possibilities of peripheral and backward vision, of the great circle of the earth which encloses him, and of the proximity of the necessary. Human history to date, including the oblivion of Being as Heidegger defines it, would seem to be the consequence of an orientation to the world implicit in the vision of a hunter. But might not the discovery that there is nothing to discover, as I have traced it here in the work of Federico Fellini, the imaginative result of an embodied eye's tacit, mimical accommodation to the earth's flesh, hint of an evolution beyond man as hunter?

<sup>1</sup>See the epigraph to Chapter One; Trudeau's tribute to Fellini can be found in the "Author's Preface" to the Doonesbury Chronicles (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1975), n.p.

<sup>2</sup>It is interesting to note that Orson Welles once levelled the charge against Fellini that he is a "provincial" who has never grown up or matured, Welles, of course, being himself a famous sophisticate: "His films are a small-town boy's dream of the big city. His sophistication works because it's the creation of someone who doesn't have it. But he shows dangerous signs of being a superlative artist with little to say." See Thomson, Biographical Dictionary of Film, p. 166.

<sup>3</sup>That the whole idea of the Open might be thought of as inhuman, Heidegger does not deny; see "Letter on Humanism" in Basic Writings, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), pp. 193-242.

<sup>4</sup>Fellini's relationship to his angel might be compared to advantage with that of the poet's to his angels in Jackson Browne's "Farther On." The last stanza of that song reads:

Now the distance leads me farther on  
 Though the reasons I once had are gone  
 I keep thinking I'll find what I'm looking for  
 In the sands beneath the dawn  
 But the angels are older  
 They can see the sun's setting fast  
 They look over my shoulder  
 At the vision of paradise contained in the light of the past  
 And they lay down beside me  
 To sleep by the roadside till morning has come  
 Where they know they will find me  
 With my maps and my faith in the distance  
 Moving farther on

Browne's angels, like Fellini's, wait behind him, amazed at his activity and his striving forward, for angels are, as Rilke imagined, beings in whom the process of transformation is complete, and since they feel no need, they need not embark on the road. In Browne's poem, he continues onward, although he seems to sense that the paradise he seeks lies actually behind him. The song appears on Browne's album, Late for the Sky.

<sup>5</sup>Existence and Being, pp. 153-54. It is worth noting at least that angels first began to appear in the second millenium B.C., at almost exactly the time, according to Julian Jaynes, that the bicameral voice of ancient man began to disappear and man began to feel nostalgia for his "lost gods." When such angels appeared in Assyria, they were known as genii, from which our word genius is of course derived (Jaynes, pp. 230-31).

<sup>6</sup>Dylan Thomas, Collected Poems (New York: New Directions, 1953), p. 24.

<sup>7</sup>Quoted in Jerome Mazzaro, William Carlos Williams: the Later Poems (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973), p. 82. The original source is Williams, Selected Essays (New York: New Directions, 1954), p. 122.

<sup>8</sup>The Indian mystic and declared avatar Meher Baba once claimed that "All evolution has taken place in the imagination." What the implications of this position are it would be beyond the scope of this study to assess. A somewhat similar theory is expounded throughout Fritjof Capra's The Tao of Physics.

<sup>9</sup>See Walter Biemel, Martin Heidegger: An Illustrated Study (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich, 1976), pp. 128-29. Did not Shakespeare mean much the same thing when in A Winter's Tale he writes:



Yet Nature is made better by no mean  
 But Nature makes that mean; so, over that art  
 Which you say adds to Nature, is an art  
 That Nature makes. You see, sweet maid, we marry  
 A gentler scion to the wildest stock,  
 And make conceive a bark of baser kind  
 By bud of nobler race. This is an art  
 Which does mend Nature, change it rather, but  
 The art itself is Nature. (IV, 83-97)

<sup>10</sup> One of the co-authors of the screenplay of this film (The Passenger) was Peter Wollen, the structuralist critic who denounces the ability of a camera to find truth in the "real" world (see Appendix V).

<sup>11</sup> See Geoffrey Hartman's excellent discussion in The Unmediated Vision, p. 80. When Thoreau writes in Walden of growing "like corn in the night" he means much the same thing as does Rilke in his idea of "hidden growth."

<sup>12</sup> William Barrett, What is Existentialism? (New York: Grove Press, 1964), p. 195. Barrett relates the anecdote of how Heidegger, after seeing a production of Waiting for Godot and being asked what he thought of the play, replied, "Beckett must have read Heidegger." The idea of a non-willed, letting-in of freedom or understanding is of course a commonplace in all Taoist and Zen thinking.

<sup>13</sup> Heidegger's discussion of unshieldedness is derived from the "Improvised Verses" of Rilke's which are quoted in their entirety in the notes to Appendix V below.

<sup>14</sup> Rilke presents a near perfect image of such abiding in his description of an Orphic tree in Sonnets to Orpheus, I, 1, p. 17. I quote it in full:

There rose a tree. O pure transcendancy!  
 O Orpheus singing! O tall tree in the ear!  
 And all was silent. Yet even in the silence  
 new beginning, beckoning, change went on.

Creatures of stillness thronged out of the clear  
 released wood from lair and nesting-place;  
 and it turned out that not from cunning and not  
 from fear were they so hushed within themselves.

but from hearkening. Bellow and cry and roar  
 seemed little in their hearts. And where before  
 hardly a hut had been to take this in,

A covert out of darkest longing  
 with an entrance way whose timbers tremble--  
 you built temples for them in their hearing.

(Quoted with permission of the publisher.)

<sup>15</sup> Life Against Death, p. 95. Brown comments that motion was,

after all, an imperfection and not true activity (energeia). An example for Aristotle of a perfect activity would be seeing, for "it seems to be at any moment complete, for it does not lack anything which coming into being later will complete its form" (p. 96).

<sup>16</sup>"The Movies, Too, Will Make You Free," Man and the Movies (Baltimore: Pelican Books, 1967), p. 134.

Sonnets to Orpheus I, 2

Almost a girl it was and issued forth  
from this concordant joy of song and lyre,  
and clearly shining through her springtime veils  
she made herself a bed inside my ear.

And slept in me. And all things were her sleep.  
The trees I always marveled at, those  
feelable distances, the meadow felt  
and every wondering that befell myself.

She slept the world. You singing god, how  
did you so perfect her that she did not crave  
first to be awake? See, she arose and slept.

Where is her death? O will you yet invent  
this theme before your song consumes itself?--  
Whither is she sinking out of me? . . . A girl almost . . .

Rainer Maria Rilke

Quoted with the permission of the publisher, W. W. Norton and Co.

## Lexicon

This list includes terms which appear in both the text and the appendices. All italicized words in the following explanations are themselves explained elsewhere in the lexicon. Names appearing in parentheses indicate the author of a particular term.

aletheia. Truth as unhiddenness or unconcealedness; still needs the undisclosable to exist; truth which respects refusal; created by the work of opening which is mimicry (Heidegger).

the angel. The muse of the Open; the more than rational distortion as the source of creativity.

answering. A hermeneutical response to a work's Saying; a following of its way (Heidegger).

aseity. The quality possessed by first structure; underivedness, immanence; the source of the subliminal.

autochthony. The power generated by a realization of no need; at-home-ness; dwelling in the Open.

Being. That which remains at the earth's refusal; used synonymously with flesh; the ground; the "nothing" of to discover that there is nothing to discover; the "venture pure and simple" (Heidegger).

circumspection. Vision in the post-hunter stage, peripheral, within the flesh (Heidegger).

conciliation. In perception, to gloss or to give the unique over to the ought.

dehiscence. A bursting forth in order to discharge the contents (as in a pod); the way in which the flesh is discovered and comes to be experienced as proximate distance (Merleau-Ponty).

diegesis. Metz' term for "the statement of what is the case"; the presence of the flesh in the movies.

direct pointing. In Zen thought, particularly apparent in the koan and in haiku, the unasking of a question by immediate presentation of a unique image which belies the logic of the question; cinematically a style which accentuates gesture, eccentricity, and the grotesque in order to achieve the same ends in a narrative.

dissembling. One being's placing of itself in front of another hiding it; the source of all overreaching; one form of conciliation or glossing (Heidegger).

dwelling. To live feeling no need.

earth. The sheltering agent of all that arises, the self-secluding; tries to draw the world back into itself; the source of the material in a work of art; the mother of the angelic.

enframing. Capturing the disclosing of Being in order to store them away as an ordered availability (Heidegger).

eye-pouch. Metaphorically, Annie Dillard's name for an imagined optical organ which stores the glimpses of the more than rational distortion for future creative use; literally, the iris frettings on the blank.

first structure. J. H. Van Den Berg's term for the order of things seen with non-glossed perception; the "raw"; Stevens calls it "the vulgate of experience."

first there is a mountain. Used synonymously with the Journey Out and Back, the story of the prodigal son; the essential process of human individuation.

the flesh. "The dehiscence of the seeing into the visible and of the visible into the seeing" (Merleau-Ponty); the lines of force of the world; its routes; the element in which the iris frettings on the blank are made.

glossing. To give to the sensed a category in such a way as to stereotype it; conciliation of the world's first structure.

the grotesque. First structure experienced in the Oblivion of Being; when judged objectively, thereby glossing its ability to Say, its gestures are threatening.

hermeneutics. Seeking the way of a work of art; heeding and answering Saying; literally the study of divine messages.

horizon. A pregnancy wherein the body and the distance participate in one visibility (Merleau-Ponty), or "the side facing us of an openness which surrounds us . . . filled with views of the appearances of what to our re-presenting are objects" (Heidegger).

iki. A word in Japanese aesthetics for "the radiance of luminous delight"; the property of art works in which Saying is predominant; the iki of the movies is the photogenic.

inside narrative. The story of solipsism, of reason, institutions, the ought, character, failure, and most of all, of objectivity; the world is always "out there" and in front, focal, non-grotesque; the story of the "first there is a mountain" stage.

the instantaneous. Literally "standing near"; the style of discovery in no need; imagination become second nature, tacit.

"iris frettings on the blank." The orientation of the axes of the embodied eye to the routes of the flesh; the tacit source of all creativity (Stevens).

knight of faith. An individual who has completed the Journey Out and Back (Kierkegaard).

major man. According to Stevens, a character

beyond  
Reality, composed thereof;

a creator, one who breaks through stereotyped vision to obtain the facts of imagination; the prime force working against the oblivion of Being.

mimicry. The realization of orientation and accommodation to the ways of the flesh. The art in man of discovering that there is nothing to discover; the tacit purpose behind human activity.

the more than rational distortion. Gestures of the flesh caught in the iris frettings on the blank; non-stereotyped, non-objective, dissonant, iridescent, they are nevertheless factual when seen with the imagination; in the oblivion of Being, they become Saying and are echoed in the mimicry of art (Stevens).

no need. Instantaneous orientation to the flesh; the quality of the autochthonous imagination of a knight of faith.

oblivion of Being. Disregard for the flesh; its perceptual disappearance is due to the domination of objectivity and the concomitant manipulation of nature which spring from surplus conciliation; the "uge of the world picture" in which the disclosures of Being are "stored away" and have no presence; in the self, alienation from one's source, the loss of the flesh and the earth as mother; a way of earth's mimicry equivalent to the first there is a mountain stage (Heidegger).

one-corner style. In Zen aesthetics, treating empty space as being as full of meaning as objects themselves; makes visually present the "mere nothing of what is."

the Open. The earth and the flesh experienced with no need.

Open narrative. The story of no need; all human activity seen as that of knights of faith or aspiring knights of faith; pure Saying; the saga of the earth and of the then there is a mountain stage.

the ought. The power behind the oblivion of Being; the denial of the inherent grotesqueness of beings through idealization (Heidegger).

outside narrative. The story of the break with the oblivion of Being; pure prodigality, in which a mountain is not a mountain.

the photogenic. The iki of the movies. The power of movies to enact mimicry (Delluc).

proximate distance. The quality of the flesh in which the horizon is experienced with no need (Merleau-Ponty).

pure draft. The primordial venturing of beings out of Being; precedes the entire Journey Out and Back; that in which all animals and plants dwell.

refusal. Being's withholding of itself at the point of the "mere nothing of what is" (Heidegger); the ultimate discovery, which the oblivion of Being refuses to respect.

rift. The conflict between the world's opening and the earth's enclosing; present as a force behind works of art; the source of man's eccentricity (Heidegger).

saga. Literally a "saying"; a narrative whose raw material is Saying; hence essentially an Open Narrative.

Saying. Its Indo-European source is sekw--to note, show, see, say; to Heidegger it is the underlying ground of poetry, the intention, manner, gesturing of art, its Being; hence Saying presents the more than rational distortion, elevating it from the subliminal to the tacit, thereby performing the work of mimicry.

second structure. J. H. Van Den Berg's term for the order perceived via conciliation and objectivity; the "cooked."

the self-secluding. That which is brought into the Open in aletheia yet remains hidden by earth's refusal (Heidegger).

serene. Poetic first structure, the pure lighting of the Open; angelic light which shines through the more than rational distortion (Heidegger).

subliminal. Literally, "below the threshold"; that which is not momentous; when converted into the tacit through the heeding of the hints of the more than rational distortion it solicits art.

tacit. Unconscious orientation able to be raised to the level of awareness; the quality of the instantaneous, both the means of presentation of Saying and its fruition in mimicry (Polanyi).

thinking. Etymologically derived from the same root as "thanking"; the process of discovery of "the coming into the nearness of distance"; the cutting of "furrows into the soil of Being" (Heidegger).

to discover that there is nothing to discover. The achievement of no need in which discovery becomes second nature, instantaneous, tacit and not Faustian; the attainment of autochthonous imagination; accommodation to the flesh.

the way. The passage to the discovery that there is nothing to discover; the path of earth's mimicry.

ways of the flesh. The eternally recurrent means or routes to which the iris frettings on the blank must acclimate themselves.

Wild Being. Merleau-Ponty's name for first structure; Outsideness is under its sway.

world. Discovery of the earth's way which man has accomplished through work; constructed out of the disclosures of Being.



APPENDIX I  
FIRST STRUCTURE AND CREATIVITY

Quality is what you see out of the corner of your eye.

Robert M. Pirsig, Zen and the Art  
of Motorcycle Maintenance

A dissonance  
in the valence of Uranium  
led to discovery.

Dissonance  
(if you are interested)  
leads to discovery.

William Carlos Williams, Paterson

In his first Duino elegy Rainer Maria Rilke proffers this startling observation:

For Beauty's nothing  
but beginning of terror we're still just able to bear  
and why we adore it so is because it serenely  
disdains to destroy us.<sup>1</sup>

To find another source which suggests that beauty and terror are somehow linked it is necessary to go only as far as the Bible, to God's injunction to Moses not to look upon his face, a vision of beauty from which one cannot recover (Genesis, 33:20-23). The same idea appears as well in the Tibetan Book of the Dead, where the soul which has departed from its bodily imprisonment sees for the first time the splendor of the creation without the mediation of the ego and, consequently, immediately flees back into another body, unable to bear the terror stemming from the majesty of the universe.<sup>2</sup> Rilke's vision would thus

appear to be fundamental and profound. Somehow man senses that beauty is but the leading edge of an immense perceptual world closed to him due to his own inability to slay the holdfast which guards its treasure: his own fear. But why does this fear exist in the first place? To answer that question is, I believe, to at least begin to answer yet another: what is creativity? For creativity might well be the human response to this fear. A Jorge Luis Borges short story, "Funes the Memorious" will provide a starting point from which I can begin to formulate an answer.

In "Funes" a solicitous narrator relates the story of his acquaintance with Ireneo Funes, a young man who, after a fall from a horse leaves him paralyzed, is able to remember everything. Whereas before his accident he "looked without seeing, listened without hearing, forgetting everything, almost everything,"<sup>3</sup> he is subsequently able to not only remember everything he has seen or imagined perfectly, but also to perceive all forms in a completely non-stereotyped fashion. Most men "gloss" their perceptions, utilizing the immense capacity inherent in the tool of language for pigeonholing the raw data of perception, glossing over the dazzling uniqueness of perceptual facts by abstracting, generalizing, and forgetting differences.<sup>4</sup> But Funes is incapable of doing so. For him, each raw perception remains exceptional, uncategorizable, and unforgettably original.

The story's title is misleading. Funes' gift is not so much an unsurpassable memory as a perception which is exhaustively concrete. The "pressure of . . . reality" upon him is so great that he cannot take refuge in the comforts of language or in rational thought. He is "incapable of ideas of a general, Platonic sort" we are told, and he comes to reject the hypothetical language suggested by John Locke in

which "each individual thing, each stone, each bird and each branch" has its own name as "too general . . . too ambiguous" (p. 65). For Funes, "who remembered not only every leaf of every tree of every wood, but also every one of the times he had perceived or imagined it," finds all language a mediation unfaithful to his experience of the world. His memory and his perception intertwine: never forgetting what he has seen before, he is able instantly to perceive the uniqueness of each new perception; since he is able to perceive each perceptual fact for what it uniquely is, he remembers it perfectly, not having recourse to the forgetfulness of generalization.

Funes inhabits, therefore, an "almost intolerably precise world." He goes far beyond the "beginning of terror we're still just able to bear" of which Rilke spoke, into a realm where sleep is nearly impossible, the world being too much with him, where even the look of his own hands comes to daily frighten him, where his ability to note minute changes in detail over time makes the "tranquil advances of corruption, of decay, of fatigue" ever-present in his experience, where all in life becomes "vertiginous." Funes' "gift" in this way comes to be a pathology.

But there is beauty in Funes' world as well, the beauty of the particular. In Funes' perception, intricate and complicated forms are elemental facts of ordinary experience, as the narrator explains:

We, at one glance, can perceive three glasses on a table; Funes, all the leaves and tendrils and fruit that make up a grape vine. He knew by heart the forms of the southern clouds at dawn on the 30th of April, 1881, and could compare them in his memory with the mottled streaks on a book in Spanish binding he had seen only once and with the outlines of the foam raised by an oar in the Rio Negro the night before the Quebracho uprising. (p. 63)

His sense of beauty, then, is not limited by any concept of symmetry or

by any ideality. The forms which men can "fully and intuitively grasp," "a circle drawn on a blackboard, a right triangle," are replaced in Funes' experience with a more "fearful symmetry" composed of the immediate intuitions of such facts as "the stormy mane of a pony, . . . a herd of cattle on a hill, . . . the changing fire and its innumerable ashes, . . . the many faces of a dead man throughout a long wake." The potential beauty of his world is inexhaustible, and the narrator stands in amazement before it: "I don't know how many stars he could see in the sky" (p. 64).

The gift of Funes, then, appears to be inseparable from its terror; it is a power which cannot exist without an ever-present nemesis. And this conflict between beauty and fear is no mere fictional problem. Funes' peculiar ability was brought about by the obvious contrivance of a fall off a horse, but men have existed who possessed memory and sensory awareness very similar to his. A. R. Luria's fascinating book The Mind of a Menomist, for example, is a case study of just such a man.<sup>5</sup> The question presents itself: why is Funes a rarity? Why are there not more like him?

In The Doors of Perception Aldous Huxley provides one possible explanation. In response to the raw sensual world of experience, to which Funes remains so closely tied, the mind had evolved a "reducing valve" in order to facilitate our biological evolution.<sup>6</sup> The "big, blooming, buzzing confusion" of the external world must be reduced to a workable, controllable order. Having experienced the non-glossed sensory realm himself during his experiments with mescaline, Huxley realized its power to enthrall. He became completely engrossed in every nuance of his perceptions while under the effect of the hallucinogenic drug, lingering attentively on objects and motions which

ordinarily he would pass by without even a glance. He came to understand that anyone who possessed such vision would be reluctant to do anything but see. It was, therefore, necessary, he reasoned, to evolve beyond this captivation with the mere moment and the raw sensual, a definite phase of our ontogeny as well as our phylogeny, in order to merely survive: for example, a creature lost in the ecstasy of perception would be an easy target for a predator. Thus the mind as reducing valve was born, in order to shift the focus of man from pure sensual perception to the more vital problem of his own biological survival.

The mind as reducing valve performs several essential functions. First of all, it conciliates the raw data of sense experience; that is, it assimilates the infinitely diverse objects of perception and strips away their essential ambiguity, causing them to conform to a scheme. Secondly, the mind excerpts from the experience of each perceptual fact what it needs from it in order to conciliate it with that scheme; because of this excerption, there is no need to see in entirety; a mere synecdoche of experience will suffice.<sup>8</sup> Third, the mind then performs the massive shift in orientation which J. H. Van Den Berg has described in his book Things as the movement from first to second structure.<sup>9</sup>

Van Den Berg distinguishes between these two means of orientation to things in this way. First structure refers to active, non-objectified, non-glossed perception. The second structure of things is the constant, objectified, stabilized world of true materiality. The world seen previous to any learned description of it is the world of first structure. This world is the primal aseity that transcendental idealism always neglects and which phenomenology has made its special province of study.

It is the world in which a child reaches out to touch the moon because it seems to him to be only an arm's reach away and small enough to grasp. But it is the world as well of all lived experience. When a road seems to be infinitely long as we pass along it exhausted, even though we may know it to be only a mile in length, then, Van Den Berg would say, we experience the road's first structure. First structure is the "tempo of things," their activity in us as we experience them. Second structure, on the other hand, is our imposed understanding and knowledge of things. The objectively certain length of the above-mentioned road is its second structure. Second structure endures and has validity. The piece of wood which lies before us is five feet in length because we have measured it against the objective standard of a rule, and our perception shows the power that this second structure has over us. For in it we conciliate all first structure data which would contradict our knowledge of its length: as it lies far away from us on the ground, it may appear to be small as a pencil, but this does not perplex us, as it would Funes; we know, in fact, that it is five feet long.

Funes, it should now be clear, is a man without a reducing valve mind. He is incapable of conciliation, or glossing, because each thing and each event are so totally unique in their perceptual forms alone, not to mention their immersion in time, that conciliation seems to him an absurd form of stereotyping, not, as western logic would term it, accurate reasoning from particulars to the general. He feels, as well, great unease at the prospect of excerpting from his experience. He cannot understand, for example, why a "dog at three fourteen (seen from the side) should have the same name as the dog at three fifteen (seen from the front)." Consequently, Funes inhabits a realm in which the

world's first structure predominates: his pathology arises from the fact that he is absolutely faithful to his sensual experience of the world. He would be, for any sabre-toothed tiger that should happen to come along, an easy target, exhibiting as he does that total enchantment with experience which the reducing valve mind sought to evolve beyond. But even Funes, as extreme a case as he is, only hints at a yet more primordial style of enchantment which lies far deeper in both the ontogeny and phylogeny of perception and to which I must now turn before making explicit the depth of Rilke's insight about the relationship of beauty and terror.

In his Principles of Psychology, William James quotes the French philosopher Condillac: "The first time we see light we are it rather than see it."<sup>10</sup> This perplexing observation was borne out by studies done of congenitally blind patients who received their vision after the first successful cataract operations conducted in this century, collected in Marius von Senden's Space and Sight.<sup>11</sup> The newly-sighted, although the majority of them were adults with a wealth of experience and memory behind them, were invariably unable to discern anything particular in their perceptual fields except light and color-patches. One, for example, reported upon opening his eyes that he could see only "an extensive field of light, in which everything appeared dull, confused, and in motion. He could not distinguish objects." All went through an experience roughly similar to what every one of us has gone through at the time of birth, and all saw the same thing: "a lot of different kinds of brightness" in which there was no distance, no size, no form. Von Senden's studies seem to show the validity of the art historian E. H. Gombrich's observation that "The innocent eye sees nothing."<sup>12</sup>

But if these newly-sighted, although experienced, worldly inhabitants found themselves alone in a world of light and color, imagine the perplexity of a newborn child, encountering for the first time the world's first structure in all its purity. For him, the world's first structure in itself would be light, and, therefore, as Condillac observes, he who is for the first time born into it would be it and not see it. This would truly be enchantment, for within this whiteout infinite repetition would hold sway. There would be no need for any new thing, nor would there be any way by which to distinguish the new.

Funes' pathology and its resulting terror are highly evolved beyond this primordial stance. But some have imagined themselves back even into its recesses. R. D. Laing, for example, has argued that it is within this realm that the insane dwell, forced to return there by the double-bind nature of their grown-up experience,<sup>13</sup> and Dylan Thomas, in "Love in the Asylum," gives us an unforgettable glimpse of such a girl, whose strange beauty is so captivating that the poem's persona longs to be "taken by light in her arms at long and dear last" in order to "Suffer the first vision that set fire to the stars."<sup>14</sup> "She has come possessed," he proclaims, "Who admits the delusive light through the bouncing wall . . ." an image which would be, but for the context of this discussion, classifiable as "surreal," but which I suggest has about it ontological rightness, perhaps even a source in the memory of the race or the individual.

Rilke's suggestion that beauty is "but beginning of terror we're still just able to bear" springs from the same source. Beauty being a name we use to evaluate the perceptual order we have until now been able to create, there must lie beyond it, in a virtual "terra incognita," other orders, although seemingly irrational, in the facts of perception



which we have not yet been able to elicit, nor to bear. And behind this beauty lies the memory of former "terra incognitas" as well, in all their terror.

Viewed in this way then, Thomas' insane girl succumbs to the terror of a remembered beyond, almost pre-verbal, in which light is everything, while Funes, whom we are told is a "precursor of the supermen," a "Zarathustra," is a victim of terror emanating from our present beyond, a post-verbal realm in which the perceptual world's first structure is more present than the mental; where the glossing mind is incapable of manipulating the burgeoning forms given to it by the senses. Between these two extremes lies the ordinary perception of modern man, and although it is dominated thoroughly by what Whitehead has called the "fallacy of misplaced concreteness,"<sup>15</sup> its belief that its own abstractions are real and alive in the world, it settles for this fallacious perspectivity, shutting out the frightening vision of Thomas' light and Funes' infinite forms because they seem threatening beyond belief. But is this not an essentially paranoid reaction?

Herbert Marcuse has shown, in Eros and Civilization, that one need not abandon Freud's concept of repression in order to hope for a better world: the problem can be overcome by proposing, as he does, that there exists a "surplus repression" above and beyond that which is necessary for the stable functioning of society.<sup>16</sup> Analogously, I would suggest that a surplus conciliation lies behind our present modes of perception, categorizing, stabilizing, stereotyping the raw sensual world to an unreal degree, making ordinary perception a drab, habitual, qualityless phenomenon and life a paucity. But this condition need not be necessarily permanent nor mandatory. It is rather, in its quest for excessive stabilization an extreme response to Rilke's "terror" and a

result of the inherent self-congratulatory nature of the rational mind to pose as the master.<sup>17</sup>

For example, George Steiner observed in Language and Silence that in the western world

literature, philosophy, theology, law, the arts of history, are endeavors to enclose within the bounds of rational discourse the sum of human experience, its recorded past, its present condition and future expectations. The code of Justinian, the Summa of Aquinas, the world chronicles and compendia of medieval literature, the Divina Commedia are attempts at total containment. They bear solemn witness to the belief that all truth and realness--with the exception of a small queer margin at the very top--can be housed within the walls of language.<sup>18</sup>

This urge, which Steiner sanctions, is truly Faustian and absurd. The example of Funes undermines this crusade, for his vision, mad as it may be, reveals that the "small queer margin" of experience which cannot be contained in language is anything but small. Only a predisposition toward a conciliated world could ever make Steiner's assessment a desideratum. The margin is, in fact, immense, and moreover, it is an essential source of the life in us. Nor is it at the top, for it encircles us; we live in its midst and glimpse it whenever our habitual glossing of experience momentarily fails. This glimpse I have designated as the more than rational distortion.

To explain the value of the more than rational distortion, I will begin by drawing an analogy from Patrick Trevor-Roper's The World Through Blunted Sight.<sup>19</sup> Trevor-Roper, a world renowned ophthalmologist, concerns himself in this book with various physiological disorders and their effect on artistic vision. His most fascinating speculations are, however, reserved for the subject of drug-induced art. In a section devoted to the jazzy, nearly baroque art produced by patients under

the influence of mescaline, Trevor-Roper proposes as an explanation of its peculiar quality the realization that under mescaline intoxication "We no longer compensate for the shifting positions of the retinal image as we rotate our eyes, and thus the objects around us seem to jump out, in time with the movements of the retinal image" (p. 133).<sup>20</sup> During mescaline intoxication, in other words, the compensatory mechanism which converts first structure into second structure is short-circuited. The result is perception very like that of Funes: recall, for example, his sense of surprise at his own hands each morning and the narrator's reluctance to even move his own hands, knowing that every gesture, even the most minute, would leap onto the threshold of Funes' perceptual field as a radically new experience.

Trevor-Roper's speculation does not end here, however. He goes on to identify the actual effect mescaline has on mental process, and by so doing he provides a powerful insight into the nature of all creativity. Mescaline, and all hallucinogenic drugs, Trevor-Roper explains, bring about "an interruption of the 'association fibres' in the posterior lobes of the brain." It is these fibres, brain scientists have speculated, which "mould the unconscious cerebral image of the seen world [first structure] into the conscious percept, altering it, in the light of our experience and needs, so that it falls into line with our established schemas, with all the attributes we think proper for the object we now recognize [second structure]" (p. 132). In other words, the mescaline experience prohibits glossing from taking place, as Trevor-Roper goes on to explain:

Mescaline thus allows us to see a far truer image than the ordered stereotype that our association fibres normally permit us to apprehend. It lets us see the true shadow colors--the blue shadow in the snow, the green beneath the red object,

and so on, that we normally discountenance; for we can cope with the flux of our complex external world only if objects remain what we expect them to be, if snow is always white and houses are always vertical, irrespective of the tilt of the eye and the slope of the retinal image. (p. 132)<sup>21</sup>

Again, what Trevor-Roper here describes could easily be the world of Ireneo Funes. But it is just as well, as he observes, a world full of what has been the stock-in-trade of great artists. Without contrasting shadow colors, a heightened sensitivity to the significance of depth and perspective, an intuitive grasp of contours, etc., where would the great artist be? (p. 134).

Funes then, like the mescaline-influenced seer, is a hyperbole of the artist, inhabiting as he does a perceptual world in which the "fallacy of misplaced concreteness" does not hold sway. For him, this world is conscious and present. For the artist, it remains tacit, unconscious if you will, not in any psychoanalytic sense, but elemental in the unconscious as Merleau-Ponty thought of it when he suggested that the unconscious should

be sought not at the bottom of ourselves, behind the back of our "consciousness," but in front of us, as articulations of our field. It is "unconscious" by the fact that it is not an object, but it is that through which objects are possible, it is the constellation wherein our future is read--It is between them as the interval of the trees between the trees, or as their common level.<sup>22</sup>

The images which find their way into imagination from this perpetual subsidiary realm of potential fact are, I would argue, a tacit source of all creativity. Or to put it more exactly, it is rather the difference one apprehends between the objects and their horizons as encountered in ordinary, common sense, glossed perception and those images and their horizons which succeed in penetrating the perceptual screening of the reducing valve mind which is really the reservoir of creativity. This different is what I have called the more than rational distortion.

While Aldous Huxley was under the influence of mescaline, the experimental psychologists with whom he worked asked him to comment upon various works of art, among which was Van Gogh's famous painting of a simple wicker chair. As he stared at it Huxley became convinced that Van Gogh's work was no mere symbol, that it was, in some sense at least, a rendering of the chair an sich, a Kantian noumenal chair. When he viewed as well Van Gogh's images of sunflowers, the same intuition occurred to him. The artist, he speculated, must therefore be one who is in contact with, on a purely sensory level, a reality which is not apparent to most perceivers. As Huxley explains:

What the rest of us see only under the influence of mescaline, the artist is congenitally equipped to see all the time. His perception is not limited to what is biologically or socially useful. A little of the knowledge belonging to Mind at Large oozes past the reducing valve of brain and ego, into his consciousness. It is a knowledge of the intrinsic significance of every existent. (p. 33)

Thus Huxley takes care to emphasize that the world of perception with which the artist is in sympathy as it shines forth in the more than rational distortion is a world of fact, not of fantasy:

The other world . . . was not the world of visions; it existed out there, in what I could see with my eyes open. The great change was in the realm of objective fact. (p. 16)

As I have already shown, since "hallucinogenic" perception bypasses the processes of the mind, revealing a more precise image of the natural world, free from association and stereotyped conciliation, that image is factual, not objectively as Huxley suggests, but potentially. Huxley's insight is accurate: the artist, or at least the visionary artist, shares in common with the mescaline user a non-ordinary perceptual world actually seen in his imagination. (Seen in this way, Hans Richter's comment that Fellini "creates the way he sees," must be taken quite literally.)

About the time of the filming of Fellini-Satyricon Fellini was asked to take LSD under medical supervision, the purpose of the study being to ascertain the drug's effect on the mind of a creative personality. Fellini has discussed his experience on several occasions, perhaps most fully in an interview with Tom Burke in the New York Times.<sup>23</sup> According to rumor, when Fellini was asked after his experience to describe what he had seen while on the drug, he replied that he hadn't seen anything that he hadn't seen already. Whether this story is factually accurate would seem to mean very little, for even Pauline Kael, one of Fellini's chief detractors, would agree to its truth in spirit (seeing him as she does a sort of psychedelic Cecil B. De Mille). Its import, however, is clear: Fellini's hallucinogenic experience did not differ greatly from his ordinary experience; but this does not necessarily imply that Fellini is lost in some never-never dream world, nor that the art which he has produced out of his visionary relation with his world is "unreal." Wallace Stevens once suggested that the realm of absolute fact would certainly contain within it everything the imagination would include (NA, pp. 60-61). It is this very realm of absolute fact in which Fellini's perception and imagination tacitly dwell, as I argue.

<sup>1</sup>Duino Elegies, I, ll. 4-7.

<sup>2</sup>See Huxley's discussion of this belief in The Doors of Perception (New York: Harper and Row, 1954), p. 56. A Greek version of this idea is portrayed in the myth of Semele; the end result of her attempt to see Zeus in all his radiance, interestingly, is the birth of Dionysus.

<sup>3</sup>Labyrinths (New York: New Directions, 1964), p. 63. Hereafter all references to this work will be cited in the text.

<sup>4</sup>For my use of the word "gloss" here I am indebted to Carlos Castaneda's explanation of it, particularly in an interview with Sam

Keen, Voices and Visions, pp. 112-14).

<sup>5</sup>See S. Luria, The Mind of a Mnemonist (New York: Basic Books, 1968).

<sup>6</sup>Doors of Perception (New York: Harper and Row, 1956), pp. 25-26. All future references to this work will be cited in the text.

<sup>7</sup>William James, Principles of Psychology, quoted in Stanley Burnshaw, p. 42.

<sup>8</sup>Julian Jaynes, The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bimemal Mind, pp. 61, 65.

<sup>9</sup>Van Den Berg, J. H., Things: Four Metaleptic Reflections (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1970). This fascinating book is a phenomenologist's approach to some problems posed by relativity theory. All future references to it will be cited in the text.

<sup>10</sup>Quoted in Zuckerkandl, p. 342.

<sup>11</sup>Senden, Marius von, Space and Sight (New York: The Free Press, 1960). See also Annie Dillard's discussion of this book in the chapter on "Seeing" in Pilgrim at Tinker Creek, from which I quote in the text.

<sup>12</sup>Quoted in Burnshaw, p. 20.

<sup>13</sup>Politics of Experience, pp. 125-30.

<sup>14</sup>Thomas, Collected Poems, p. 119.

<sup>15</sup>In In Process and Reality (New York: Free Press, 1957), p. 10, Whitehead defines "misplaced concreteness" as "neglecting the degree of abstraction involved when an actual entity is considered merely so far as it exemplifies certain categories of thought. There are aspects of actualities which are simply ignored so long as we restrict thought to these categories. Thus the success of philosophy is to be measured by its comparative avoidance of this fallacy. . . ."

<sup>16</sup>This is a primary theme of Eros and Civilization (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), see particularly pp. 50-95.

<sup>17</sup>Roger Sperry's recent work with split-brain patients confirms this. These individuals, all of whom had their left, essential rationalistic and speech oriented hemisphere separated from their right, essentially "intuitive" and holistic hemisphere due to accidents or operations exhibited unusual forms of behavior. Their then separately functioning hemispheres found themselves in competition, and when the right brain (and left hand) exhibited more acute perception and ability to perform certain skills which the left brain did not specialize in, the left brain and right hand attempted to regain predominance by showing off; even though its responses and performances were incorrect, it still attempted to maintain itself as the "special" one. See Robert Ornstein's discussion of Sperry's experiments in The Psychology of Consciousness, pp. 55-60.

<sup>18</sup>Language and Silence (New York: Atheneum, 1970), pp. 13-14.

<sup>19</sup>The World Through Blunted Sight (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970). All future references to this work will be cited in the text.

<sup>20</sup>For a fascinating further exploration of the effect of LSD on perception see John N. Bleibtreu's The Parable of the Beast (New York: Collier, 1968), pp. 62-83. Bleibtreu analyzes the relationship of the pineal gland to human reasoning and perception and the effect LSD has on the pineal gland's output of serotonin, a substance which seems to be essential in the "grooving" of the brain into proscribed, eventually stereotyped, channels. Experiments performed by the pharmacologist Peter Witt further demonstrate LSD's enhancement of the concreteness of events and activity. Witt drugged spiders with perritin, chloral hydrate, caffeine, and LSD in order to observe the effects the various drugs would have on the spider's innate capacity for building a web. All of the drugs except LSD caused the formation of misshapen and haphazard constructions. But a spider under the influence of LSD produced a perfect web, working with great concentration and, in effect, improving on nature. See Niko Tinbergen, Animal Behavior (New York: Time-Life Books, 1965), pp. 104-105.

<sup>21</sup>Several twentieth century poets have achieved similar effects in their medium. Jerome Mazzaro has shown, for example, how William Carlos Williams came to reject the idea of the sentence as being composed of loci or compartments which would allow experience to cluster around each image as mere associations (see William Carlos Williams, The Later Poems, p. 83). The same could be said for Pound, Stevens, Hart Crane, and others. Think also of Marc Chagall's paintings, wherein all verticality is obliterated and the tilt of the eye seems to be a fully accepted part of the Chagall world.

<sup>22</sup>The Visible and the Invisible, p. 180. The meaning which Merleau-Ponty here affixes to the unconscious world would seem to make it very similar to the "tacit dimension" described by Michael Polanyi.

<sup>23</sup>New York Times, 8 Feb. 1970, pp. 10, 15. See also the interview with Tullio Kezich in Juliet of the Spirits, p. 27. In the Burke article, Fellini goes so far as to suggest that LSD might be the "new messiah," and at the end of the interview offers Burke some of the hallucinogen.



## APPENDIX II

### THE MORE THAN RATIONAL DISTORTION

A more severe,

More harassing master would extemporize  
Subtler, more urgent proof that the theory  
Of poetry is the theory of life,

As it is, in the intricate evasions of as,  
In things seen and unseen, created from nothingness,  
The heavens, the hells, the worlds, the longed-for lands.

Wallace Stevens, "An Ordinary  
Evening in New Haven"

The desire to hold nature to itself, to name it "flatly," is ever-present in Stevens, in the late poem "The Rock," for example, he hopes for a final "cure of the ground/Or a cure of ourselves, that is equal to a cure/Of the ground, a cure beyond forgetfulness."<sup>1</sup> But it is never fully satisfied, for man's conceptualized pigeonholing of reality is continually overthrown by a prompting to make new which comes from within it. In "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction" Stevens calls this prompting the "more than rational distortion," and he identifies it further as "The fiction that results from feeling," that is to say, from its reception in man comes his narrative powers, his ability to imagine and his need for the creation of fictions which will help to explain the "fat girl" in which he lives, but which remains always "in difference" (CP, p. 406). I have established already in the preceding pages, however roughly, what this "more than rational distortion" might be, showing its source in the very physiology of perception. But since it

is from Stevens' continual preoccupation with its nature and its force that my understanding of it is derived, it will be worthwhile to survey briefly its recurrent appearance in his collected poetry in order that its meaning will remain vivid in these pages which detail the presence of this same more than rational distortion in Fellini's art.

"There is in reality," Stevens claims in The Necessary Angel, "an aspect of individuality at which every form of rational explanation stops short" (NA, p. 93). This individuality is the more than rational distortion, and it is the business of the poet, as Stevens insists again and again, in his prose and in his poetry, to get at it. Each image which man secures of his world is merely the "elaboration of a particular of the subject" (NA, p. 127), an excerption, and these "elaborations," these "gettings at," Stevens tends to call facts. Thus the province of the imagination is factual, for Stevens refers rightly to man's capacity for securing new individuality as imagination. Imagination, consequently, has several distinctive characteristics.

The imagination is, first of all, always "at the end of an era." Because man's imagination always seeks a new order and a new individuality,

it is always attaching itself to a new reality, and adhering to it. It is not that there is a new imagination, but that there is a new reality. (NA, p. 22)

Secondly, the imagination is a power not so much within man, as a power within which man dwells. For, as Stevens explains, the poet

comes to feel that his imagination is not wholly his own but that it may be part of a much larger and more potent imagination, which it is his affair to try to get at. For this reason, he pushes on and lives or tries to live, as Paul Valéry did, on the verge of consciousness. (NA, p. 115)

It is this affair of the poet, and of all men of the imagination such as Stevens and Fellini, that makes them what Stevens once designated as

"major men," "characters beyond/Reality, composed thereof" (CP, p. 335).

Thus for Stevens the realms of complete fact and of complete imagination are, contrary to all standard definitions of these two words, made up of the same contents. As Stevens explains,

there are so many things which, as they are, and without any intervention of the imagination, seem to be imaginative objects that it is no doubt true that the absolute fact includes everything that the imagination includes. (NA, pp. 60-61)

And that which makes objective facts seem to possess imagination is the more than rational distortion. For the more than rational distortion need not be thought of as anything like the product of fancy, as say Coleridge conceived it, for it is not the creation of the intellect at all but rather indisputably there, at least in potential, in perception itself, when its tendency toward conciliation momentarily falters. Huxley, it will be remembered, during his experience with mescaline, believed himself to be in the presence of "the realm of absolute fact," and Stevens understood such moments to be the source of all poetry, as he explains it in this way:

Perhaps there is a degree of perception at which what is real and what is imagined are one: a state of clairvoyant observation, accessible or possibly accessible to the poet, or, say, the acutest poet. (OP, p. 166)

In his poetry, these states of "clairvoyant observation" figure prominently. Before they come, the objects revealed in perception remain "as unreal as real can be/In the inquisitive eye" (CP, p. 468) of all the many conciliating individuals of Stevens' poetry, from the men at the Sorbonne in "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction" to Mrs. Alfred Uruguay, to the early and late Crispin of "Comedian as the Letter C." The latter, for example, takes his unobservant eyes to sea and there,

meeting for the first time without his usual mediation the "Ubiquitous concussion, slap and sigh,/Polyphony beyond his baton's thrust" (CP, p. 28) of the ocean, has his mind blown by the more than rational distortion. He witnesses there

memorial gesturings,  
That were like arms and shoulders in the waves,  
Here something in the rise and fall of wind  
That seemed hallucinating horn, and here,  
A sunken voice, both of remembering  
And of forgetfulness, in alternate strain. (CP, p. 29)

His new experience makes "him see how much/Of what he saw he never saw at all" (CP, p. 36), and though by the poem's end his "relation" to this newly seen world has been "stopped," it for the moment makes him a new poet.

Crispin's experience on the ocean is of what Stevens at other times calls the "vulgate of experience" or the "eye's plain version" (CP, p. 465). He sees what Borges' Funes saw at all moments, the first structure of reality before all orders have been imposed. This "gaudy, gusty panoply" (CP, p. 30) is, as I have already shown, not to be endured, for as Stevens elsewhere observes, "The plainness of plain things is savagery" (CP, p. 467). The vulgate is "gibberish," but is, nevertheless, the source of all art, for this "muddy centre" of our experience existed "before we breathed," Stevens reminds, and even then it was "Venerable and articulate and complete" (CP, p. 383, my italics). It remains, therefore, the source of inspiration, of newness, of the facts with which the imagination deals, and the motion of the poem, and of the movies as well, as I have shown, is as Stevens suggests,

from the poet's gibberish to  
The gibberish of the vulgate and back again. (CP, p. 396)

The "first idea," the "vulgate of experience," remains, for Stevens, "The hermit in a poet's metaphors" (CP, p. 381). Its appearance as the

more than rational distortion in the poems Stevens identifies with iridescence and dissonance, that is, with the difference between the expected and the seen. Crispin, for example, journeys into "A savage color" (CP, p. 30) within which his perception changes. In "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction" it is "the grossest iridescence of ocean" which "pierces us with strange relation" (CP, p. 383); the "Place of the Solitaires" (another of Stevens' appellations for "major men") is a "place of perpetual undulation" (CP, p. 60); in "Ordinary Evening in New Haven" the "faithfulness of reality," of the quotidian round of day and night, only serves to "make gay the hallucinations in surfaces" (CP, p. 472); and the hero, we are told, is he who is able to blend in "hymns" the "iridescent changes" which he experiences in

A thousand crystals' chiming voices  
Like the shidow-shadow of lights revolving  
To momentary ones. . . . (CP, p. 279)

Again and again Stevens describes the source of poetic inspiration in terms of distortion;<sup>2</sup> it is for him always, as it is in "The Sun This March,"

Like an hallucination come to daze  
The corner of the eye. (CP, p. 134)<sup>3</sup>

For Stevens it is the "corner of the eye," the peripheral vision, which makes poetry, for it sees the unexpected facts of the more than rational distortion; it discovers and does not impose.<sup>4</sup>

"The poem," Stevens claims, "must resist the intelligence/Almost successfully" (CP, p. 350). That is, it must escape the focal's imposition of a stereotyped reality. For Stevens, "To impose is not to discover." Man's imaginative gains are garnered, not from the "applied/Enflashings: of reason's click-clack" (CP, p. 387), but out of what he calls "major weather," Stevens' name for the influence of the "vulgate

of experience." His faith that poetry is not a willed imposition is shown in "The Comedian as the Letter C" in the metamorphosis of the poem's first line, "Nota: man is the intelligence of his soil," Crispin's pre-more than rational distortion view, into the "rude aesthetic" he comes to forge after his ocean voyage: "Nota: his soil is man's intelligence" (CP, pp. 27, 36). Because "The squirming facts" of the periphery "exceed the squamous mind" (CP, p. 275), there must be in the poet a trust in "the ever never-changing same,/An appearance of Again, the diva dame" (CP, p. 353) that it will sustain him and his art. The more than rational distortion, though a seeming, is real, and when Stevens tries to persuade us of its existence, his urgency is apparent:

It is like a thing of ether that exists  
Almost as predicate. But it exists  
It exists, it is visible, it is, it is. (CP, p. 418)

In "The Figure of the Youth as Virile Poet," Stevens supplies his most complete definition of imagination, one which enables us to understand with some clarity exactly what is meant by the more than rational distortion. Imagination, he explains, is "the sum of our faculties." And he goes on to describe its characteristics:

The acute intelligence of the imagination, the illimitable resources of its memory, its power to possess the moment it perceives--if we were speaking of light itself, and thinking of the relationship between objects and light, no further demonstration would be necessary. Like light, it adds nothing, except itself. (NA, p. 61)

Only if the products of the imagination are understood as gifts of the periphery, drawn from the eye-pouch's creative reservoir of non-ordinary perception filled with the non-stereotyped experiences of the world's flesh, the "vulgate of experience," is this passage at all explicable. Imagination adds to the world nothing that is not there, for like light,

it only discovers what is there in the panoply of sensation, though it may not yet be realized. Therefore the "seeming" of the imagination is not a seeming after all, but the way things are, for as Stevens explains:

It is possible that to seem--it is to be,  
As the sun is something seeming and it is.

The sun is an example. What it seems  
It is and in such seeming all things are. (CP, p. 339)

When the imagination is realized as such, emanating from the periphery but making focal the world in which the future world of fact will come to be fact, then man comprehends, as Stevens explains in "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven" the nature of his project as a "carpenter" of the real.

The life and death of this carpenter depend  
On a fuchsia in a can--and iridescences  
Of petals that will never be realized.

Things not yet true which he perceives through truth,  
Or thinks he does, as he perceives the present,  
Or thinks he does, a carpenter's iridescences,

Wooden, the model for astral apprentices,  
A city slapped up like a chest of tools  
The eccentric exterior of which the clocks talk.  
(CP, p. 478, my italics)

The discovery of this project and its acceptance constitute the discovery that there is nothing to discover.

<sup>1</sup>Collected Poems, p. 526; see J. Hillis Miller's discussion of this poem in "Stevens' Rock and Criticism as Cure," Georgia Review, XXX, No. 1 (Spring 1976), 5-31 and Part II, XXX, No. 2 (Summer 1976), 33-48.

<sup>2</sup>Perhaps the best example of Stevens' interest in the more than rational distortion in the Collected Poems is "Woman Looking at a Vase of Flowers" (CP, p. 246-47). In the poem, a woman remembers the time when she glimpsed it while seated at her piano. Her "little owl," her wisdom, relates how at that magical moment

High blue became particular  
In the leaf and bud and how the red

Flicked into pieces, points of air,  
 Became--how the central essential red  
 Escaped its large abstraction, became,  
 First summer, then a lesser time,  
 Then the sides of peaches, of dusky pears. . . .

The inhuman colors fell  
 Into place beside her, where she was  
 Like human conciliations, more like  
 A profounder reconciling, an act,  
 An affirmation free from doubt.  
 The crude and jealous formlessness  
 Became the form and the fragrance of things  
 Without clairvoyance, close to her.

She has seen the process of conciliation firsthand.

<sup>3</sup>For a similar view, see the epigraph to Appendix I from Robert Pirsig. That "quality," Pirsig's word for that which generates all existing things, enters through the periphery is Pirsig's thesis.

<sup>4</sup>Alan Watts sees the difference between eastern and western thought as being their respective emphases on focal and peripheral vision (The Way of Zen, p. 8). Peripheral vision, it should be remembered, brings the rods into activity, thus allowing for perception of motion and of a multiplicity of objects greater than that possible in focal vision, although it sacrifices color in order to do so.



### APPENDIX III

#### SAYING IN THE THOUGHT OF MARTIN HEIDEGGER

Fishes are dumb, . . . one used to think. Who knows?  
But is there not perhaps a place, where what would be the fishes'  
language is spoken without them?

Rainer Maria Rilke, Sonnets to  
Orpheus, II, 20

In these pages I have cited several encounters with the more than rational distortion in the works of Stevens, Thomas, Rilke, and Merleau-Ponty. In nearly all of these experiences, however, an unusual phenomenon occurs again and again. I have suggested that vision is the paradigmatic way in which the more than rational distortion is discovered, and yet these four authors have spoken of it as being conveyed at one and the same time visually and as a voice.<sup>1</sup> For example, Merleau-Ponty, quoting Hermes Trismegistus, describes it as "the inarticulate cry . . . which seemed to be the voice of the light." Dylan Thomas, in "From Love's First Fever to Her Plague," wrote of a time when

the four winds, that had long blown as one,  
Shone in my ears the light of sound  
Called in my eyes the sound of light. (CP, p. 24; my italics)

And Wallace Stevens, as I have already shown, described Crispin's experience with the ocean in "Comedian as the Letter C" as a meeting with "the veritable ding an sich, at last/. . . a vocable thing,/But with a speech belched out of hoary darks/No way resembling his, a visible thing . . ." (CP, p. 29); in all these instances the seen world, dissonant and wild beyond the objectification engineered by conciliation,

has seemed to say as well. The more than rational distortion, I can now suggest, is also a Saying, when encountered as an aspect of the world's flesh, although it is predominantly a visual phenomenon.

Toward the end of his life, Martin Heidegger explored the nature of this Saying in two books entitled Poetry, Language, Thought (1971) and On the Way to Language (1971). In these works another Heidegger reveals himself, one evolved beyond the earlier major formulation of his ideas in Being and Time (1927). His earlier "existential" categories are replaced by a world view which shares much in common with Oriental thought. At times the style of his writing even takes on the quality of a Zen koan. In On the Way to Language, for example, can be found "A Dialogue Between a Japanese and an Inquirer Concerning Language" which might well have been recorded in a Zen monastery, and in the poems collected in "The Thinker as Poet" the complicated, opaque style of the early Heidegger has metamorphosed into a meaningful brevity resembling that of the haiku, the purest of all tests of true Zen enlightenment. The later Heidegger has come full circle from early despair to affirmation. He has completed his Journey Out and Back, and his discovery of Saying was instrumental in that progression. In the following pages I will undertake to explain what Heidegger thought Saying to be, for his insights are I believe of particular significance not only, as Heidegger suggests, for the understanding of the nature of language, but, as I have shown, for an understanding of cinematic narrative. W. R. Robinson has shown that the movies' real subject is the relationship of words to images, embodying as they do both thematic and purely cinematic means of telling stories,<sup>2</sup> and since Heidegger's Saying presents in germ a way by which this essential dichotomy might perhaps be overcome, it should aid our perception of the movies.

It is not my purpose here to explicate the later thought of Martin Heidegger, nevertheless, a certain grasp of the general direction of his thinking will be indispensable for an understanding of his idea of Saying. Heidegger's most basic premise is that man, due to his emphasis on rational, re-presentational, objective thinking, has become radically estranged, alienated, from what he calls Being. Being in Heidegger's thought is a term of the utmost complexity, but it is possible to make clear what the word designates for him in light of the preceding discussion. Heidegger's "Being" should be thought of as that from which Merleau-Ponty's flesh is made. It is the primordial ground from which man actualizes all present and future figures. For Merleau-Ponty, the paradigm for the actualization process is vision, while for Heidegger, as he elaborates in Being and Time, it is human care.<sup>3</sup> Yet buried in Heidegger's thought is a theory of vision very similar to Stevens' and Merleau-Ponty's, which I will here seek to bring into the open.

Heidegger spent a lifetime showing the way back to a purer relationship to Being. He traced the origins of our neglect of it and found them in the history of philosophy. He analyzed contemporary forces, such as technology (which he thought of as the organized maintenance of the oblivion of Being), which have perpetuated Being's decline. And he tried to imagine the effects which a reclamation of man's home in Being would engender, perhaps most poetically in a dialogue (a form which he much preferred in later writings) entitled "Conversation on a Country Path About Thinking," in which Heidegger articulates his own version of the discovery that there is nothing to discover, envisioning a kind of "meditative" thinking in sharp contrast to the "calculative" thinking and perception which have dominated the West. This non-manipulative, non-willing thought, Heidegger insists,

would not need to seek its freedom, but would instead find its "releasement to that which regions" (akin to Merleau-Ponty's understanding of proximate distance, a bringing near of the horizon which still permits the depth of the world) present, to be let in ("CCP," p. 61) and not won out of struggle; it would feel no need.

Man does not now exist in such a sense of releasement; in fact man presently exists in a stage of human history which Heidegger refers to as the "oblivion of Being." As Heidegger explains,

where we already are, we are in such a way that at the same time we are not there . . . (OWL, p. 93)

This seems like a vatic utterance, but Heidegger means something very specific by it, as I will show. The oblivion of Being Heidegger defines as:

the self-concealing of the origin of Being divided into whatness and thatness in favor of Being which opens out Beings and remains unquestioned as Being. (EP, pp. 3-4)

The origin of Being comes forth out of what Heidegger calls, following the early Greek thinkers, physis. Physis was the Greek word for what the Romans came to call natura, which became our concept of nature. To the Greeks, it was a sort of "self blossoming emergence" within which man secured his understanding of the world.<sup>4</sup> But the acts by which man gains knowledge were not thought of by the early Greeks as acts of will, nor did they need the guidance of what we now think of as logic (for them logos). Knowledge was instead a matter of gathering that which emerged from physis, and truth was thought of as aletheia, that which is no longer concealed or hidden, that which is open and available (IM, p. 51).<sup>5</sup> The logos was the power in man to enact this gathering, and it was not originally a matter of propositions at all. Thus language was for them something which they dwelt within, not

something categorically different from perception, and aletheia simply was and did not have to be argued. The early Greeks thus knew what Wallace Stevens proclaims at the end of "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven":

It is not in the premise that reality is solid. (CP, p. 489)

In his discussion of Rilke's idea of the "open" (See Chapter 1, p. 21) in "What are Poets For?" Heidegger calls physis by other names, the "pure draft" and "the venture" (PLT, p. 105).<sup>6</sup> For both Rilke and Heidegger, all creatures other than man remain always within the "pure draft," always under its sway. Man alone can turn his back on it and pretend that it does not exist; he alone can exist in the oblivion of Being. All beings are ventured by the vis primitiva activa of Being, which Heidegger defines as the "venture pure and simple" (PLT, p. 100), and all remain in a participatory interchange with Being's venture. Only man attempts to escape beyond it, through his will and his knowledge establishing his own existence, a word which literally means "to stand outside." But modern man, having lost this original relationship to physis, remains lost in abstraction, in the oblivion of Being, removed, by the mediation of logical objectivity, from the very source from which he springs.

It should be apparent that Heidegger's physis has appeared before in the above pages. Van Den Berg's first structure is a return to physis, to the raw, from which the world is created. The mistake the Romans made and that we inherited is in thinking of nature as a source. Nature is itself a derivation of the physis, which is more primordial (ultimately, as primordial as the white light itself into which all seers are born). With them begins the triumph of what Heidegger calls the "ought." The ought entered the world via propositions and the

tyranny of a verbal logos which removed the value of the mere being of things gathered from the physis and replaced it with validity as value, creating a second structure to replace the first.<sup>7</sup>

Under the sway of the ought, modern men are "staggering":

We move about in all directions amid the essent, and no longer know how it stands with being. Least of all do we know that we no longer know. (IM, p. 169)

Nevertheless, the ought is an upwardness and brings progress. It cannot be avoided, and this is for Heidegger, as it was for Nietzsche before him, the great "world historical irony." Under the power of the ought things become objects before they attain their nature as things ("CCP," p. 78), but without it nothing would become focal; man's reason would have nothing with which to work; all would remain, as it was for Funes, too totally unique to allow for abstraction or for thought as we know it.

For Heidegger, language has been historically the "custodian" of the ought. The Greek logos was an original gathering, but in language, because of its repeatability, the original gathering becomes a mere glossa, for the aletheia discovered by the logos is not "experienced for itself" but is instead mediated. Truth as aletheia becomes detached from experience in language (IM, p. 155). Due to its power, the original logos becomes the arbitrator of discourse; physis is replaced by the ideal, and the image and all the sensory world of "appearance" comes to be something which is not, because, in its total uniqueness, it cannot possibly meet the demands of the ought for repeatability and generality (IN, p. 154). By the time of Plato, this attitude has begun to hold sway.

This detaching of the figure from the ground of being is, as William Barrett rightly suggests, Heidegger's version of the Fall of man.<sup>8</sup> It grants to man's reason almost unlimited power, for it gives

to him a machinery of form and content under which almost everything can be subsumed, including Being as a perception, as Heidegger explains:

if form is correlated with the rational and matter with the irrational, if the rational is taken to be the logical and the irrational the alogical; if in addition the subject-object relation is coupled with the conceptual pair form-matter; then representation has at its command a conceptual machinery that nothing is capable of withstanding. (PLT, p. 27)

And even if one agrees with Alfred North Whitehead's argument that the function of reason is "to promote the art of life,"<sup>9</sup> it seems impossible to deny Heidegger's assertion that something monumental has been lost in the process of its acquisition as a dominant power. Perhaps Robert Pirsig described the tragic overtones of this historical accident best:

And now he began to see for the first time the unbelievable magnitude of what man, when he gained power to understand and rule the world in terms of dialectic truths, had lost. He had built empires of scientific capability to manipulate the phenomena of nature into enormous manifestations of his own dreams of power and wealth--but for this he had exchanged an empire of understanding of equal magnitude: an understanding of what it is to be a part of the world, and not an enemy of it.<sup>10</sup>

(Whitehead's tendency to minimize the tragic by subsuming its effects under the banner of process is possible only because of his essentially abstract point of view, which neglects almost entirely the personal. Pirsig, speaking from experience, cannot so easily neglect it. Nor can Fellini, as I have already shown. His repugnance for the ideal, proclaimed in the Playboy interview and present throughout his films, should be seen as stemming from essentially the same realization to which Pirsig's and Heidegger's investigations of the history of philosophy brought them.)

This fall is nevertheless a fortunate one, and the hope which

dominates Heidegger's later writings emanates from his embracing of the oblivion of Being as a felix culpa. The anger at history which can be felt throughout his Introduction to Metaphysics has by the later The End of Philosophy (1973) turned into the same sort of amor fati which Nietzsche embraced in his last years. Heidegger makes his peace with human evolution, for he comes to understand that man's fate, his "forgetting of how it is with Being," was essential, because

Being itself can open out in its truth the difference of Being and beings preserved in itself only when the difference explicitly takes place. But how can it do this if beings have not first encountered the most extreme oblivion of being, and if at the same time Being has not taken over its unconditional dominance, metaphysically incomprehensible, as the will to will which asserts itself at first and uniquely through the sole precedence of beings (of what is objectively real) over Being? (EP, p. 91)

I quoted this passage earlier (p. 25) and suggested that it contained within it a philosophy of history on which all that I have to say is based. It is now possible to understand what it says. Heidegger has here come to a monumental realization: only through the loss of the ground of Being, its total removal from perception and from experience, accomplished via reason's power to gloss, in the oblivion of Being's outsideness, can the things of the world ever come to reveal themselves. Since, as I have already shown, the structure of the world is lost at the beginning in the light, it is absurd to bemoan the growth beyond it, into second structure, as an expulsion from Eden. The oblivion of Being, which is, in fact, the domination of second structure, of conciliation and excerption and abstraction over perception, is but a replacement for fear. That which is excerpted by it is nothing less than Being as a presence in perception. Thus man's lived experience in the world never merely is, as Pirsig correctly observed. Instead man is in such a way that he is not there. But this willful ignorance,



of which few primitive peoples the world over have ever been guilty, is at the same time an evolutionary step which allows, as Heidegger argues, for a manifest bringing forth of all natures from physis. Wallace Stevens in his "Adagia" suggests that "Reality is not what it is. It consists rather in that which it can be made into" (OP, p. 178). But what it can be made into, Heidegger might reply, is what it is. Or, as Heidegger himself has explained it in perhaps the most beautiful passage he has written:

If Being is what is unique to beings, by what can Being still be surpassed? Only by itself, only by its own, and indeed by expressly entering into its own. Then Being would be the unique which wholly surpasses itself. . . . But this surpassing, this transcending does not go up and over into something else; it comes up to its own self and back into the nature of its truth. Being itself traverses this going over and is itself its dimension. (PLT, p. 131)

The oblivion of Being is thus nothing more than this making process.

What is being made is no less than the world. Not all beings have a world or even aspire to having one. As Heidegger reminds, a stone, a plant, an animal, all have no world, for they "belong to the covert throng of a surrounding in which they are linked." They participate together in "the pure draft." For all beings remaining in the pure draft, nothing ever becomes overtly present, and so the pure draft is their home. Man alone dwells in the realm of "the things that are" (PLT, p. 45). All things are originally "ventured" or flung into the draft, and hence cannot remain out of danger, yet man is the only creature who is, as Rilke observed,

adventurous  
more sometimes than Life itself is. . . . (PLT, p. 99)

He alone runs the risk of the oblivion of Being in order to discover what he is. There, on the outside, man seeks a home again which would encompass Being.

If this adventure were to cease entirely, Heidegger has observed, "The eye, the vision, which originally projected the project into potency" would become "a mere looking at or looking over or gaping at" (IM, p. 52), as it is for the child staring for hours at the white curtain before him and for Funes, lost in his vertiginous perception, the before and after, respectively, of the oblivion of Being. Clearly then vision is alive and well during this necessary outsideness, this period in human evolution when, as the Zen parable so beautifully describes it, "mountains are not mountains, rivers are not rivers, trees are not trees," because they are not allowed simply to be, but are instead mere grist for the mill of rationality's forward thrust, made available through conciliation. It is alive because it never experiences the ought entirely, because it never loses contact with the world's flesh of which it is a part. Tacitly dwelling in the pure draft, human vision stores Being's presences in its eye-pouch, later to be turned into the new. Heidegger, like Stevens and Merleau-Ponty, sees a gap running through the visible creation. He refers to it as the "rift-design"--that which separates us always from the simple pure draft to which animals belong. And like Merleau-Ponty, he realizes that this guarantees to us in our eccentricity that the more than rational distortion and the world's Saying will always be present.

Charles Sanders Peirce once suggested that all of our theories of discovery and of how logic functions are inadequate, that induction and deduction really do not explain the presence of, say, a new scientific theory, and certainly not a new poem. He suggested that we consider that there might be a third form of thinking which ushers in the new. He called this style "abduction," intending to suggest by his choice of this word that it is not so much a willed process on the part of

man's intellect as a being taken, or possessed, by the truth.<sup>11</sup> The more than rational distortion is an abduction; it short-circuits the machinery of the ought by means of what Heidegger calls Saying, as I have explained in Chapter One.

Saying functions in this way only because beings "dissemble." That is, one being tends to look like another of the same type to man's vision, prone as it is, due in part to the advent of his rational powers, to stereotyping or glossing, the conversion of first structure into second structure. This dissembling has tremendously important consequences, as Heidegger explains:

If one being did not simulate another, we could not make mistakes or act mistakenly in regard to beings; we could not go astray and transgress, and especially we could never overreach ourselves. (PLT, p. 54, my italics)

If it were not for dissembling, Heidegger suggests, there would be no Faustian temperament in man, and in this he is surely correct. For if there were no dissembling, if each image and each being were unique, as they were to Huxley and to the mescaline-influenced seer, or to Funes, seeing would be an end-in-itself; no overreaching rationality would ever arise from it. The "true shadow colors," the very movements of the eye itself, which Trevor-Roper described, the "iris frettings," these would be enough.

But dissembling exists; it is, in fact, nearly a dominant force, and yet somehow, as I have suggested, the creative mind sees beyond dissemblance, and glimpses how things really are past all their power to disguise themselves, an ability which they acquire, in fact, through us. That is, things speak to it of what they are, the Say themselves, show themselves, present themselves undissembled as the more than rational distortion, and it heeds this hinting. In this way, man

"appropriates" (the term is Heidegger's) the new, for nothing could seem more "appropriate" than seeing something for what it is. Heidegger might well have utilized Peirce's term "abduction" as well, for Saying takes place almost in spite of the individual; bringing as it does the truth of aletheia, unhiddenness, man as the receptor of Saying becomes "he who is made use of for the nature of truth" ("CCP," p. 85).

All Saying is, therefore, "projective saying," for it brings into the world not only that which will eventually be said, that is language, in the form of the new, but also that which is unsayable as well. For all things not only dissemble; they enact as well what Heidegger calls their own "refusal." That is, at bottom the ordinary world is "uncanny" (PLT, p. 54), for at bottom all things refuse to disclose themselves entirely. They retain their integral mystery. It is at this level at which "we can say no more of beings than that they are" (PLT, p. 53). Vision cannot surpass this level, as Merleau-Ponty sees as he gazes at the tiling in the pool (p. 226). For when beings are seen in their refusal, they are concrete and the realm in which they exist is the Open. All Saying ultimately comes from this realm.

From Saying, all signs arise; without it they could not be signs (OWL, p. 123). But signs are part of the machinery of calculative thinking, sustaining man's objective relation to the world, and fueling the forward thrust of reason. Saying, on the other hand, is a "breath for nothing" in that it is not humanly purposive, for all its effects are on the behalf of Being and not for man. Saying brings news of the "mere nothing of what is" (PLT, pp. 132-33).<sup>12</sup> Language is to Saying then as second structure is to first structure, as common perception is to the perception of Funes, as Merleau-Ponty's "vision" is to the "visible."

That nearness and Saying are the same Heidegger thinks seems a "flagrant impossibility," but one which he hopes will "not be softened in the least" (*OWL*, p. 95). To this impossibility, Merleau-Ponty has (see Appendix IV) provided the solution. Saying is but another name for Merleau-Ponty's "intimate distance." It is a relationship within the world's flesh in which the more than rational distortion is experienced as a revelation of "the mere nothing of what is." Wallace Stevens gives a beautiful description of its quality in "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven" when he writes of man's "breath" as he approaches the real within the "anonymous color of the universe" being

like a desperate element  
That we must calm, the origin of a mother tongue

With which to speak to her, the capable  
In the midst of foreignness, the syllable  
Of recognition, avowal, impassioned cry,

The cry that contains its converse in itself,  
In which looks and feelings mingle and are part,  
As a quick answer modifies a question,

Not wholly spoken in a conversation between  
Two bodies disembodied in their talk,  
Too fragile, too immediate for any speech.  
(*CP*, pp. 470-71, my italics)

There is, however, no need to think of this act of "recognition" and "avowal" as taking place between two things "disembodied"; Stevens reveals here the same basic predisposition to idealism that always lurks offstage in Heidegger's thought as well. The experience of Saying can be understood wholly within Merleau-Ponty's world flesh.

<sup>1</sup>Was not James Joyce thinking of the same phenomenon when he claims in *Finnegans Wake* that "'Tis optophone which ontophanes"? (quoted in Norman O. Brown, *Closing Time* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), p. 97); "opto"--from the eye; "phone"--a sound or voice; "onto"--being; "phanes"--to make visible, but, more originally, simply "light."

<sup>2</sup>W. R. Robinson, "The Movies, Too, Will Make You Free," p. 130.

<sup>3</sup>See Being and Time, in particular Section I, Vi, pp. 225-273.

<sup>4</sup>Heidegger's most lucid and complete account of the Greek understanding of physis appears in An Introduction to Metaphysics. My discussion of Heidegger's view of history is largely drawn from this work.

<sup>5</sup>In "The Question Concerning Technology," Heidegger shows that to the early Greeks the bursting forth or blooming of physis was captured by two essential human activities: poiesis and techne, which were both thought to be modes of revealing truth as aletheia not altogether different, or qualitatively separate, from physis itself, which was thought to be poiesis in the highest sense (QT, 10-13).

<sup>6</sup>It is for this reason that Heidegger suggests that "We will get closer to what is, rather, if we think of all thus [human building in general and the construction of a temple in particular] in reverse order, assuming of course that we have, to begin with, an eye for how differently everything then faces us" (PLT, p. 43).

<sup>7</sup>It was this "ought" against which Nietzsche found himself in total rebellion as early as The Birth of Tragedy. See, for example, his outrage at morality's tendency to find "life continually and inevitably . . . in the wrong"; Trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p. 23.

<sup>8</sup>Irrational Man, p. 230.

<sup>9</sup>The Function of Reason (1924; rpt. Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), p. 4.

<sup>10</sup>Pirsig, Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, pp. 377-78.

<sup>11</sup>See "The Logic of Abduction," Essays in the Philosophy of Science, ed. Vincent Tomas (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1957), pp. 235-255. Walker Percy has recently rejuvenated Peirce's idea to explain language acquisition in The Message in the Bottle (New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1975), pp. 3-46.

<sup>12</sup>In Duino Elegies (number nine) Rilke identifies Saying as the purpose of human life, in a passage which must have exerted considerable influence on Heidegger:

Are we, perhaps, here just for saying: House, Bridge,  
Fountain, Gate, Jug, Olive tree, Window,--or possibly: Pillar,  
Tower? . . . but for saying, remember, oh, for such saying as  
never the things themselves hoped so intensely to be. (DE, p. 75)

#### APPENDIX IV

##### THE FLESH

Thus since the seer is caught up in what he sees, it is still himself he sees: there is a fundamental narcissism of all vision. And thus, for the same reason, the vision he exercises, he also undergoes from the things, such that, as many painters have said, I feel myself looked at by the things, my activity is equally passivity--which is the second and more profound sense of the narcissism: not to see in the outside, as the others see it, the contour of a body one inhabits, but especially to be seen by the outside, to exist within it, to emigrate into it, to be seduced, captivated, alienated by the phantom, so that the seer and the visible reciprocate one another and we no longer know which sees and which is seen.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty

In "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven," Stevens attempts to describe the topos in the experiential world from which true poetry comes, and he discovers that

Close to the senses there lies another isle  
And there the senses give and nothing take,

The opposite of Cythere, an isolation  
At the centre, the object of the will, this place,  
The things around--the alternate romanza

Out of the surfaces, the windows, the walls,  
The bricks grown brittle in time's poverty,  
The clear. A celestial mode is paramount,

If only in the branches sweeping in the rain:  
The two romanzas, the distant and the near,  
Are a single voice in the boo-ha of the wind.  
(CP, pp. 480-81)

Like Stevens, Merleau-Ponty knew well that the "distant and the near" are truly a single voice. He argued long and persuasively for the ultimate value of man's embodied condition and against all forms of mysticism

which hoped for pure merger, oneness, eradication of depth, or a nunc stans relation with being. Only the body he claimed can bring us to the things themselves, which, like us, are not flat but beings in depth. The world, Merleau-Ponty argued, can be open only to those who co-exist in the world with all the things about them, in the world's flesh. Everywhere, vision reveals inexhaustible depth. Although the visible, he writes in the "Working Notes" to The Visible and the Invisible, is always "further on," this does not mean that it is inaccessible (VI, p. 217). The visible, in fact, remains remote only if we attempt to bring it close by means of pure abstract thought. But if we think of the visible as "an encompassing, lateral investment, flesh" a new possibility confronts us: a sense of the "immediate" which is "at the horizon" (VI, p. 217, 123). And within this proximate distance man achieves a new understanding, that the vision "neither envelopes . . . nor is enveloped by" the visible:

The superficial pellicle of the visible is only for my vision and for my body. But the depth behind this surface contains my body and hence contains my vision. (VI, p. 138)

Like Funes, man would then come to realize, when his objectivity is understood truly as a reductionism, that the presumably definite horizon of his abstract, conciliated world is actually, as Heidegger puts it, "but the side facing us of an openness which surrounds us; an openness which is filled with views of the appearances of what to our re-presenting are objects" ("CCP," p. 64). And thus a true "face-to-face" with his world would have to acknowledge all that the flesh includes, by being open to a new horizon which is in fact a "new type of being . . . a pregnancy" in which the body and "the distances participate in one same corporeity or visibility in general, which reigns between them and it, and even beyond the horizon, beneath the skin,



unto the depths of being" (VI, p. 149). What is more, the man who sees this new horizon realizes that he too has his depth, that the visible which lies before him in an horizon structure also backs him up, closing in behind him (VI, p. 135). By emphasizing in this way both the periphery and the depth which lies beyond man, Merleau-Ponty's element of the flesh makes possible an evolution beyond the image of man the hunter. For in some sense at least, as I show, man would, as part of the world's flesh, no longer need to discover his "releasement" but rather to allow it to be "let in."<sup>1</sup>

Consequently, man's existence is, for Merleau-Ponty, necessarily eccentric. The visible world remains for us

something to which we could not be closer than by palpating it with our look, things we could not dream of seeing "all naked" because the gaze itself envelops them, clothes them with its flesh. (VI, p. 131)<sup>2</sup>

The only way to achieve anything like the intersubjective merger with the world which Poulet, Raymond, Beguin, and the Geneva critics long for is, according to Merleau-Ponty, to remove oneself from the world.<sup>3</sup> To an embodied observer, his "flesh and that of the world therefore involve clear zones, clearings, about which pivot their opaque zones" (VI, p. 148), and it can hardly be otherwise. Like Paul Ricoeur, Merleau-Ponty believes that human existence is necessarily faulted;<sup>4</sup> that is, the "reciprocal insertion and intertwining" of the visible body and the spectacle within which it is contained become "concentric," thereby merging together and achieving oneness, only when man lives "naively." But the very moment man begins to question, or to move about in the depth of being, the two circles or vortexes of vision and the visible become "slightly decentered" with one another (VI, p. 138).

From out of this gap, this eccentricity, come

reflections, shadows, levels, and horizons between things (which are not things and are not nothing, but on the contrary mark out by themselves the fields of possible variation in the same things and in the same world).<sup>5</sup>

This "seeming" is of course the more than rational distortion, which can now be seen to be present in the very eccentricity of the world's flesh. In The Primacy of Perception, Merleau-Ponty gives an unforgettable description of its function in painting. "Art," he begins, "is not construction, artifice, meticulous relationship to a space and a world existing outside. It is truly the 'inarticulate cry,' as Hermes Trismegistus said, 'which seemed to be the voice of the light.' And once it is present it awakens powers dormant in ordinary vision, a secret of preexistence" (my italics):

When through the water's thickness I see the tiling at the bottom of the pool, I do not see it despite the water and the reflections there: I see it through them and because of them. If there were no distortions, no ripples of sunlight, if it were without this flesh that I saw the geometry of the tiles, then I would cease to see it as it is and where it is--which is to say, beyond any identical, specific place, I cannot say that the water itself--the aqueous power, the sirupy and shimmering element--is in space; all this is not somewhere else either, but it is not in the pool. It inhabits it, it materializes itself there, yet it is not contained there; and if I raise my eyes toward the screen of cypresses where the web of reflections is playing, I cannot gainsay the fact that the water visits it, too, or at least sends into it, upon it, its active and living essence.<sup>6</sup>

Merleau-Ponty's association of the "voice of the light" with distortion, with the "reflections, shadows, levels, and horizons between things" is, of course, upheld by all that I have shown here. Like Trevor-Roper, Huxley, and Stevens, Merleau-Ponty has seen that art springs from the ever-narrowing gap which lies between the world's first and second structure and in the flesh.

For Borges' Funes, it is now possible to suggest, the flesh of the world becomes too much for him, for the dehiscence of its routes

happened all at once: Funes found himself incapable of adaptation or orientation in its overwhelming complexity. But for the artist, living in that other isle Stevens describes, heeding the "alternate romanza," the flesh becomes available only in partial visions which he experiences in its very center, storing (taking notes on) its hinting of the way in his eye-pouch.

Although it does not directly concern us here, it is interesting to note that Merleau-Ponty was, at the time of his death, attempting to construct a "unified field theory" to explain the common origin of language and ideation in human perception.<sup>7</sup> He had already defined thought itself as "the sublimation of the flesh" and had argued that all ideas must be thought of as appearing "directly in the infra-structure of vision" (VI, p. 145). He suggested that man needs to understand as well a "wild Logos" which is "not a set of principles or laws, but rather a system of levels posited in the sensible field by our body in its primal assuming of position before the tasks of the world"<sup>8</sup> and, therefore, does not reach after ideality. In it would lie a new understanding of the imagination, for the imagination, he had come to believe, was none other than "the baroque proliferation of generating axes for visibility":<sup>9</sup> "iris frettings on the blank."

<sup>1</sup>See Chapter Five for a discussion of the evolution beyond the hunter.

<sup>2</sup>See, too, Stevens' "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction" for a similar view: Nanzio Nunzio, standing before Ozymandias, asks him to cover her in a "final filament"; but Ozymandias replies that it can never be done, for

the bride  
Is never naked. A fictive covering  
Weaves always glistening from the heart and mind. (CP, 395-96)

<sup>3</sup>This is also the argument of J. H. Van Den Berg; constancy, the

"ding an sich," the nunc stans, these are available only to those who absent themselves entirely from the scene. Perception "belongs to things as something that is inalienable to them" and perception can take place only in the flesh (see Things, pp. 29, 77).

<sup>4</sup>Paul Ricoeur, Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and The Involuntary (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966), p. 160.

<sup>5</sup>Signs, Trans. Richard C. McLeary (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 160.

<sup>6</sup>The Primacy of Perception, ed. James M. Edie (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 182.

<sup>7</sup>In The Visible and the Invisible, he speaks of "the operative Word" as the "obscure region whence comes the instituted light" just as "the muted reflection of the body upon itself is what we call natural light" (p. 154) and suggests that

if we were to make completely explicit the architectonics of the human body, its ontological framework, and how it sees itself and hears itself, we would see that the structure of its mute world is such that all the possibilities of language are already given in it. (p. 155)

<sup>8</sup>Lingis, p. li.

<sup>9</sup>Lingis, p. liii.

APPENDIX V  
MIMICRY AND THE MOVIES

What rays passed through this retina still unretained by  
mind? How long has sight's center continued pupil to other  
men's imaginings?

Stan Brakhage

'Tis optophone which outophanes.

James Joyce

I think of cinemas, panoramic sleights  
With multitudes bent toward some flashing scene  
Never disclosed, but hastened to again,  
Foretold to other eyes on the same screen.

Hart Crane, The Bridge

In Sherlock, Jr. (1924), Buster Keaton plays a motion picture projectionist. Near the end of the film, after an estrangement from his girlfriend, he falls asleep in the projection booth, and his other self, through the use of double exposure, leaves his prone body and walks down the center aisle into the movie screen. As in the famous Zen tale of the Chinese painter who one day walked into one of his works and disappeared, Keaton enters his medium and leaving rationally ordered space and time behind him, finds himself at the mercy of the movies' version of reality. He leans nonchalantly against a tree standing in the pastoral scene in which he finds himself, but when the scene shifts to a winter landscape, he falls forward helplessly into a snowdrift, his

previous support having vanished back behind the cut. Wherever the movie goes, he must go; whatever it enacts, Buster must act in accordance.

This subliminal excursion into cinematic space and time, although only a dream, evidently works upon him a lasting influence, for when he is finally awakened by his sweetheart seeking reconciliation, he again turns to the movies as a model for his actions. In the movie which he is projecting, and which he and not the girl sees, another man reaches out to embrace a woman. Buster follows suit. The man on the screen gives the woman a kiss. Again Buster looks to the screen for inspiration and again imitates the cinematic event. He and his sweetheart are reunited. Once more Keaton turns to the movie image as fuel for his imagination and finds that the scene on the screen has cut to a time several years in the future and shows the man and woman now surrounded by several screaming children. Keaton looks on perplexed, uncertain of either his ability or desire to mimic this last imaginative leap.

Keaton, however, needs to heed only one movie narrative and attempt to follow its lead. As viewers, we face a more difficult task, one which, thanks to Keaton's genius, presents in miniature a model by which to understand the nature of the movies as a medium and their possible evolutionary import. Our problems of attention are much more complex than those of Buster in the film. For while he becomes trapped within cinematic space and time in his adventure into the movie on the screen, we must accommodate ourselves not only to the events of the projected film but to the movie in which this movie appears as well. And when Keaton follows the lead of the movie-within-the-movie, it

raises implicitly another question for us as viewers, one which should perplex us much more than even the prospect of a large family perplexes the wary Keaton in the film. Does the movie Sherlock, Jr. serve as an inspiration for us as the movie-within-a-movie does for Keaton? If the movies can form Keaton's imagination, can they or should they form ours?<sup>1</sup> Before attempting to answer these questions it will be necessary to first comprehend the nature of the cinematic inspiration and then to foresee what exactly the movies would seem to call on us to do.

"Art," the avant-garde composer Edgard Varese once commented, simply "means keeping up with the speed of light."<sup>2</sup> If this is so, then the viewer or critic who wishes to do as the art does must keep up with the speed of light as well. To do so, however, as I have endeavored to show in the previous chapters, would not produce other-worldly, fantastic, science fiction, but only ones faithful to the guide of the more than rational distortion's iridescence, its Saying. "Like light," Stevens suggested, "the imagination adds nothing, except itself." Keeping up with the light would only be to discover a world in which we already live instead of living there, as Heidegger insists is the case, in such a way that we are not there. But to do so is no easy feat, and yet certainly movies among all the arts would seem, as an art of light, the most likely candidate for accomplishing such an end.

Movies, after all, are magic, and although the director may be thought of as a mountebank, as Ingmar Bergman suggested,<sup>3</sup> he is as well, as Fellini has said, a "sorcerer" in control of an amazing optical illusion. Due to the phenomenon of persistence of vision, the human eye is "tricked" into seeing the still photographs which make up a reel of motion picture film as a continuity when in fact there is

no continuity. If our perception were but fast enough, we would realize the "objective" truth, that during nearly one third of each film the screen is blank; only two thirds of the time is there even an image on the screen. Movies appear to the viewer as a unified phenomenon, a continuum from first image to last, but in reality a movie is filled with gaps, blank spaces between the frames. A movie is a ----- and not a ———. <sup>4</sup> And yet the gaps are not nothing, as those diabolical movie theater operators of the fifties knew when they inserted into the gaps, between the "flicks" of those movie images which become conscious perceptions, subliminal clues to "buy popcorn" and "enjoy coca-cola." The gaps can have their say. <sup>5</sup> (That such "subliminal seduction" can take place may seem at first a matter of mystery. But since within the human eye there are 100,000,000 sensors and only 5,000,000 channels leading from them to the brain, <sup>6</sup> it seems certain that the eye itself must do a large amount of its own processing, certainly enough to inspire a trip to a concession stand.)

But all of this is not just a problem of the movies. The phenomenon of persistence of vision can occur at all only due to the very nature of what the German ethologist Jacob von Uexkull called the human umwelt, or perceptual world. An investigation into the human umwelt reveals clearly that movies are a model of how all human perception takes place. Von Uexkull, a friend of Rilke (whose theories of poetry may owe much to him), was fascinated with the subjective senses of time which various creatures possess. He studied everything from snails to trout to human beings in order to determine for each what its moment might be. <sup>7</sup> For von Uexkull, a moment was the smallest increment of time within which a sensation could be detected as such. A trout, for example, von Uexkull found from experiments to have a moment of 1/50 of a second,



while a man's is roughly  $1/24$  of a second. Thus a trout could potentially receive twice as much information in the same period as a man. It is due to man's moment then that he perceives the projected still pictures of a movie as a movie. To a trout, a bird, a rabbit, or a cat, all of which have moments of shorter duration than man, a movie might be a series of stills. Our human umwelt then is of a middle nature; our perception of the world is much more intense than that of a cattle tick, for example, whose moment biologists have discovered may last up to eighteen years, but it is much less intense than that of a bird, to whom our experience might seem like a series of freeze-frames. For every animal focal experience is literally momentous, and what lies outside the biological limit imposed by its moment is, like Kant's noumenal world, beyond all comprehension, although subliminally (literally, "below the threshold") it may work its effects.<sup>8</sup>

Uexkull distinguished further between what he called accented and unaccented moments. Although the moment of any animal is physiologically determined by such factors as its pulse beat and the speed with which it transmits signals along the nerves and is a part of its metabolic give-and-take with the world, through learning and adaptation and conditioning an animal comes to raise certain experiences to the level where they take on a quality, such as pain, pleasure, or attention, and to demote other stimuli to a tacit level. As John Bleibtreu observes, the sound of an airplane passing overhead is to a child an accented moment which brings into play his senses, while to an adult the airplane would most likely be only tacitly present in his experience, its passing having become an unaccented moment due to habituation.<sup>9</sup>

Due to the nature of the human moment then, we experience the world as a continuity, as we do the movies, although to do so is an

inescapable illusion. We cannot be conscious of those gaps in our experiences which are just as surely there as are the spaces between the frames of a strip of movie film. To ask our consciousness to be aware of what it is not conscious of is, as Julian Jaynes has recently observed,

like asking a flashlight in a dark room to search around for something that does not have any light shining on it. The flashlight, since there is light in whatever direction it turns, would have to conclude that there is light everywhere. And so consciousness can seem to pervade all mentality when actually it does not.<sup>10</sup>

What does pervade all of man's experience of the world is rather, as Jaynes reminds, "reactivity." Reactivity is the taking account of the world both subliminally, that is, of stimuli which have never reached the level of consciousness and cannot ever do so, for they fall outside the human moment (i.e., the space between the frames in a movie, which, as long as the film is projected at the proper speed, will never be seen) and tacitly, that is, of stimuli which, though unaccented and almost inaccessible to any kind of focal awareness, are nevertheless potentially available for conscious inspection (i.e., a man recognizes the face of a person tacitly by reading certain clues--the shape of the nose, the color of the eyes, etc.--and although he has not consciously singled these features out to make his discovery he probably could, if pressed to do so, point out the tacit signs by which the recognition took place).<sup>11</sup> When man walks, he reacts to the ground; he reacts to the feel of a pen in his hand, to the marks on a piece of paper which make up a poem, to effects of color and light.<sup>12</sup> He reacts to the sign "Buy Popcorn." Yet all these moments are unaccented. Does this mean they are without quality?

George Bernard Shaw in Back to Methusaleh observed that one of

man's greatest delusions is his desire to attain full consciousness. He points out that the history of evolution clearly shows that all forward advances have involved making functions instantaneous, or in other words, reactive. Breathing, digesting, teething, circulation, walking, are all more easily executed because they are unconscious, although logically these activities must at one time have been matters of effort, of focal awareness, and not at all instantaneous. The Lamarckian Shaw believed that just as life must learn to walk (or ride a bicycle), it must also learn to digest until it becomes an instantaneous function. This led Shaw to believe that the purpose of evolution was not to increase consciousness, but to increase our tacit adaptation until all our activities, not just bicycling, or walking, but thinking, playing the piano, painting, morality, became "second nature" to us, governed not by consciousness, but by our tacitness.<sup>13</sup> Rilke I believe meant much the same thing when he described "the task of transformation" man must undertake, which is the real subject of the Duino Elegies:

our task is to stamp this provisional, perishing earth into ourselves so deeply, so painfully and passionately, that its being may rise again, "invisibly," in us. We are the bees of the Invisible. . . . The earth has no other refuge except to become invisible in us, who, through one part of our nature, have a share in the Invisible. . . . and can increase our holding in invisibility during our being here,--only in us can this intimate and enduring transformation of the visible into an invisible no longer dependent on visibility and tangibility be accomplished, since our own destiny is continually growing at once more actual and invisible within us.<sup>14</sup>

From the point of view of our present conceptions of consciousness, to seek to experience the world instantaneously by means of reactivity alone seems to be a mad desire to dwell in the gaps, in nothing.<sup>15</sup> But within those gaps is acquired nothing less than the gift of Saying. Saying is not momentous, literally, but only a dissonance between the

moments, a discovering that there is nothing to discover, a freeze-frame is, directed tacitly to the eyes' routings in the world's flesh from which all the accented moments of consciousness, the world itself in fact, are generated. Partaking in the aseity of the earth, Saying fuels man's imagination in his attempt to align himself with that aseity through the mimicry of art.

In his Letters to A Young Poet, Rilke attempts to convince Kappus of the need for an openness to "the most strange, the most singular, and the most inexplicable" by reminding him that man is not an alien to his world.

Men, he tells his young correspondent, are

set down in life as in the element to which we best correspond, and over and above this we have through thousands of years of accommodation become so like this life, that when we hold still we are, through a happy mimicry, scarcely to be distinguished from all that surrounds us.<sup>16</sup>

This process of accommodation is the very same "task of transformation" which Rilke described in the passage quoted above. I will call this process, following Rilke's use of the word, mimicry.

Since Aristotle's famous observation in The Poetics that poetry in general springs from an instinct in man for imitation, mimesis has been an essential term in the evaluation of all art. Although it has the same etymological root, and in some contexts is used as a synonym for mimesis, I intend to use the term mimicry in a very distinctive way. In biology, mimicry refers of course to all evolutionary developments in which one organism comes to resemble another in form, color, or behavior, in order to be indistinguishable. The impetus for such adaptation is often the need for protection.<sup>17</sup> For example, the viceroy butterfly has come to resemble the monarch, whose taste is horribly repugnant to all its natural enemies, thereby sharing the protection the monarch has

accrued, even though the mimic's own taste is not foul. The appearance alone is enough to deceive predators. Or, to use an example dear to the history of evolution, moths near Manchester, England before the industrial revolution had evolved protective coloration in order to blend in with the color of birch trees in that area. When pollution resulting from the growth of industry in Manchester began to turn the birches black from accumulated soot, within the space of a few decades the moths' color had changed in order to maintain their protection.

Mimicry is a seeking for invisibility, then, an attempt, as Rilke saw, to become so like something in the world that one would exchange identity with it. But this blending need not be thought of as a merger or a loss of individuation, not if it is understood instead, as George Bernard Shaw saw, as the end product of a biological tendency which seeks only to make all functioning instantaneous through evolution:

The time may come when the same force that compressed the development of millions of years into nine months may pack many more millions into even a shorter space; so that Raphaels may be born painters as they are now born breathers and blood circulators.<sup>18</sup>

I have called art mimicry and now it is possible to explain my reasoning. In Chapter Five I suggested that man's evolution has been from the hunted into a hunter. But is not this growth an escape, a flight, like most mimicry, from threat, the threat of the overwhelming majesty of the visible creation and from the even more primordial whiteness from which it sprang? That which Martin Heidegger calls the oblivion of Being is then an inevitable phase of his evolution into a hunter, and I have shown the effects which this phase has had on his perception and his experience of the world. I suggested as well that man the hunter might well be a preparatory stage for a further

evolutionary advance, which I have called throughout the discovery that there is nothing to discover. And I showed as well that all of this could be thought of, when demythologized, as taking place in the human physiology, in particular in what I called the development of "iris frettings on the blank," especially as a growing attention to peripheral, as opposed to focal (or foveal) vision and to the great circle of the earth instead of the looming distance. The discovery that there is nothing to discover, I can now suggest, is a mimicry, prepared by man's activities as a hunter, foremost among which has been his incessant production of art. Art is an evolutionary work of biological mimicry, an accommodation, part of the "task of transformation" of which Rilke wrote.<sup>19</sup>

At the very beginning of the history of the movies, the art of the Englishman Percy Smith, one of the most neglected of all early movie pioneers, made the particular function of the movies as mimicry apparent. A naturalist who perfected time-lapse photography, Smith's series of films made before the First World War, The World Before Your Eye, the later series Secrets of Nature and Secrets of Life, and his development of cine-biology as a scientific tool provided for most people the first means by which to witness many previously unexperienced events of the natural world in their actuality.<sup>20</sup> Witnessing Smith's films, the French poet Blaise Cendrars understood immediately their great artistic impact as well, noting that "Accelerated, the life of flowers is Shakespearean."<sup>21</sup> Smith's art recorded events otherwise denied to us due to the very nature of the human moment. Our perception is simply not slow enough to see a flower bloom, the rate at which we perceive being intended for other, more rapid movements, as I have shown.

Smith's genius as a filmmaker was, however, not an aberration, but rather in the mainstream of cinematic narration.<sup>23</sup> In his own way Smith kept up with the speed of light. The openings of flowers which he captured with his patient art made evident the quality and the pace with which the flesh proceeds toward its dehiscence, a process from which man's history is not exempt. In one of Rilke's poems, a group of women, their eyes intent on the surrounding natural scene, cry out to the poet an explanation of their nature:

Look, how everything unfolds: we are like that.<sup>24</sup>

The unfolding Smith revealed with his time-lapse photography is of the very same nature as that process which is at work in Rilke's women; he calls it elsewhere "hidden growth." It is the essential subject of the movies as well, an art made out of the very nature of the human moment, when they serve as a vehicle for the earth's Saying and become thereby the mimicry of its evolution, in which all grows, as Thoreau once so exquisitely put it, "like corn in the night."<sup>25</sup>

That in the movies things have their way almost in spite of us, French thinkers like Andre Bazin, Amedee Ayfre, Jean Mitry, Claude Levi-Strauss, Merleau-Ponty, and Roger Munier, each influenced in some way by phenomenology, have all agreed.<sup>26</sup> But to Munier, the author of Contre l'image and "The Fascinating Image," this is cause for terror.<sup>27</sup> Munier's thesis is startling, and his fears are so genuinely expressed that they deserve serious consideration. He believes that movies severely limit our boundless imaginations by restricting us to the real world. Like atomic energy, the movies let loose into the world a destructive force (Andrews, pp. 247-48). The "photogenic" quality of the movies (a term he borrows from Louis Delluc) reveals to us only "the sense which things give themselves." Since movies are

not really "pictures" at all, shaped by the "intimate and reassuring sense we give things," they efface man (p. 90). By presenting the "pre-face" of the world which, "resuming its ancestral ascendancy," takes on "cosmophonic" power, the movies seduce us to become "shipwrecked" in the image and under the sway of a new logos which controls us (p. 89). Although

We try with our pathetic film syntax, with our editing and camera placement, to organize discourse or at least a view of the world . . . it is always the world which has the last word. Forever opaque, it outlives the transparency of human speech. We have created machines and tools which no longer serve us but which serve a world that now commands us. (Andrews, p. 248)

Taken to the "other side of things" by the movies, we find ourselves ignored and excluded from the world (pp. 93-94), which becomes, instead of the "immediate real," the "very expression of the imaginary."

The similarity of Munier's understanding of the movies to my own is readily apparent.<sup>28</sup> And yet they are really polar opposites. For brilliant as it is, Munier's theory is finally only another expression of hysteria in the midst of the oblivion of Being which forgets, as R. D. Laing says (after Heidegger) that "the dreadful has already happened." Man is not and cannot be shipwrecked in the world by the image (only his abstract rationality and his other-worldly idealism can accomplish that). A part of the flesh and of its dehiscence, he is sustained through the lifeline of his "iris frettings on the blank." The photogenic which, to Munier, makes man an alien in his world, brings him rather into an instantaneous closeness, a proximate distance, to it. For as the instrument of mimicry, the image in all of its fascinating power could appear as an alienating force only to a mind paradigmatically predisposed to a solitary humanism which rationalizes its own solipsism.

To heed a cinematic narrative and the fascinating image as the



model for the functioning of our imagination, as Keaton does in Sherlock, Jr., would not shipwreck us but would instead make of our lives a mimicry of unfolding faithful to what I call in Chapter Two the ways of the flesh, providing, of course, that the movie itself is faithful. A Munier simply does not have the faith to do so. If each cinematic story, each small "history," is a facet of a larger unfolding, in which mimicry's agents work their effects--history itself--then the function of the critic in relation to a movie would seem to be to heed, understand, and answer its Saying and to show the kind of unfolding it is, to ascertain its place along the way, in order to make its Saying available for human mimicry.

How does the photographic image serve as a medium for this showing (Saying)? Stan Brakhage, the underground filmmaker, has insisted that only a radically experimental approach to cinematics can possibly escape the predisposition to a glossed perception of the visible. As Brakhage rightly insists, the camera eye was ground to achieve as nearly as possible a nineteenth century Western sense of compositional perspective; the standard speed of projection is geared solely to the human moment; and even the basic point of view of the camera, generally approximating that of the human eye level, is designed to represent an experience of the horizontal and vertical as we are accustomed to it.<sup>29</sup> Brakhage clearly wishes to escape conciliation altogether by making the movies a vehicle for the exploration of non-human moments. His desires receive theoretical amplification in Gene Youngblood's fascinating Expanded Cinema. Youngblood insists that the vast majority of movie narratives are entropy-producing, only repeating timeworn visual cliches, failing to train the eye for the burgeoning uniqueness which awaits all explorations beyond ordinary glossed

perception. But it is important to remember that among the movies which Youngblood sees as entropy-producing are nearly every classic of the history of the movies, including, to some extent, 2001: A Space Odyssey, none of which can compare to the works of the real geniuses of the movies, experimental filmmakers like Brakhage, John Whitney, and Jordan Belson.<sup>30</sup>

The movies, Youngblood insists, should be art and not entertainment, and he distinguishes very clearly between the two: "Entertainment gives us what we want; art gives us what we don't know we want."<sup>31</sup> Certainly it is difficult to disagree with him here, but is it necessary for movies to break completely with all traditions of narrative and to seek a non-anthropomorphic cinema which dispenses entirely with what I called in Chapter Two "the ways of the flesh," the everyday quotidian facts of lived human experience which are, in fact, the real objects of our mimicry? The movies which Youngblood champions are, it is true, an exploration of the realm which surrounds our lives beyond our glossed "description" of the visible, but their literally "unearthly" power to give to us "what we don't know we want" is an abomination of "the way," a backward step, a search for subliminal and not tacit orientation, in the sense in which I used these terms earlier.

In the discussion above I showed that our perception is limited definitively by our physiologically determined human moment, just as a trout's moment limits its experience, etc. Beyond this limit then lies what is non-momentous, and what may be non-momentous to man, it should be remembered, might well be momentous to other perceivers. Man's moment is thus a place in the circle of all possible experiences, the momentous in potential, if I may so deem it. That which lies beyond the human moment cannot be experienced, but that does not necessarily

mean that it does not have its influence on us. Remember the example of the "Buy Popcorn" sign which can produce business at the concession stand even though it is a message which we cannot ever raise to the level of consciousness. Because he lives in the midst of all the potentially momentous, participating in it, as Heidegger would say, as Dasein, he cannot escape its influence. It is, to borrow Stevens' phrase, a "major weather" which has its way with man, like the subliminal popcorn sign, a weathering, the nature of which he will never know. It is a "rawness," as Levi-Strauss would say, which makes man do things, for he is open to its suggestion in a way that no other animal is (to the extent in fact that he seeks to understand not only his own moment, but the moments of all other creatures besides and, via the instrument of abstraction, the nature of the momentous in potential as a whole. Man is not, as William Barrett has argued (following Heidegger) a "windowless monad" as he was for Leibniz; his life is always "out of doors" in the circle of all the momentous, in Being.<sup>32</sup> Receptions which pass through this permeable boundary from beyond the human moment I call subliminal.

Within the human moment a similar situation exists. The human moment consists of, as Uexkull showed, the accented and the unaccented, that to which we give conscious attention and that which we ignore. But that which does not achieve focal attention fails to do so for various reasons. Digestion, for example, is unaccented because it takes care of itself, being one of those processes evolution has been able to make instantaneous. The plane passing overhead, however, is unaccented because it is habitual, and familiarity has bred the contempt of making it an unaccented phenomenon.<sup>33</sup> It is not so to a child. And there is a third class of the unaccented, the repressed, that which has been

eliminated from the accented because its experience is fearful. The unaccented therefore seems to serve as a buffer zone between the momentous-at-large and the conscious human moment, but in man at least it is also a repository for the useless and the fearful, moments on their way down and up respectively in relation to the accented. Like the subliminal realm, the unaccented too has its sway over us. I have called this sway the tacit.

And yet between these three subdivisions a peculiar interrelationship grows, one which is, in fact, fed by the more primordial interchange with the raw subliminal. The character of the unaccented, tacit realm, its essence, is the instantaneous; the instantaneous is a relationship to the flesh of proximate distance, as its etymology ("standing near") reveals, and, as George Bernard Shaw observed, evolution makes manifest. Instantaneous orientation to the flesh, if ever completely realized (as it is for example in Teilhard de Chardin's Omega Point),<sup>34</sup> would swell the accented moment until it equals the unaccented realm. Such a dilation would necessarily result in the elimination of the habitual and the repressed, which can now be shown to be constituted by the same human proclivity.

Both repression in all its forms and the demotion of habitual perceptions to the realm of the unaccented in order to neglect them are products of fear. It has been common knowledge at least since Nietzsche and Freud that human history has been a flight from repetition. Now the ultimate repetition, as I have shown, is the white light itself into which all seers are born and from which the flesh grows to become imminent. From it man flees in fear as if the white light were always a present possibility, as it is to the insane. And from the pure potential inherent in that white light, which is the future, he shrinks in

fear, as if, presaging Funes' vertiginous world of pure possibility, he consequently glosses over that uniqueness, repressing the potency of his eyes, conciliating the world's first structure, repressing it.

But the promptings of the light persist and this condition becomes a stage only, the oblivion of Being, which is subsumed under the more encompassing sway of earth's mimicry of itself. The subliminal aseity enters into the human moment and transforms itself. Entering as the white light into man, he, by means of his art of life, makes explicit the possibilities within it until his working of it shows forth its materials fully, until his work is a mimicry of it, until his orientation within it is as instantaneous as it is. But this activity is no simple gesture. Stevens said that the poem goes from the gibberish of the poem to the gibberish of the vulgate and back again. All the motions of man's mimicry move likewise; from the subliminal to the explicit to the subliminal, from the original prompting of the more than rational distortion to the work of art, in which the more than rational distortion becomes imminent as the work's Saying, and back to the next more than rational distortion, until the process is instantaneous, tacit, and even change becomes repetition when the light is no longer feared but trusted.

In an essay on "The Film and the New Psychology" Merleau-Ponty rightly suggested that movies exhibit a form of perception which enables us to "rediscover a commerce with the world and a presence to the world which is older than intelligence."<sup>35</sup> But to experience that "presence," it should be observed, is to encounter what Heidegger calls the earth's "refusal," that point in man's explorations beyond which he cannot go, where "we can say no more of beings than that they are," for to go beyond it is to go totally beyond the human moment, the earth

in us. The cinema of Brakhage, Belson, and Youngblood fails to acknowledge the refusal of the earth. They seek to subvert repetition altogether instead of transforming it. Their art is a betrayal of mimicry. The strength of the movies, their value, lies I believe in their ability to raise the unaccented repressed and habitual moments of human experience to artistic accentuation, a feat accomplished by means of a work's Saying and a hermeneutical answering, in order that they might return to the more natural unaccented orientation of the instantaneous tacit while still respecting the earth's refusal. Unlike Youngblood's "expanded cinema," mimicry is not Faustian.

Many film historians have observed that from their inception at the beginning of the century movies have tended to follow two distinct paths of development, that of realism and imagination, each an outgrowth of the arts of the two movie pioneers Lumiere and Melies, the recorder of actual events and the cinematic magician respectively. Seen in this light, Youngblood's conception of the movies would have to be seen as the ultimate extension of the latter. But the movies as evolving mimicry present a third and more inclusive possibility. To understand fully what that possibility is however it will be necessary to trace the development of the "film as recorder" aesthetic of Lumiere as it reaches its fruition in Italian neo-realism, the movement in which Federico Fellini of course began his career in film.

Neo-realism, the structuralist Peter Wollen insists in Signs and Meaning in the Cinema, "rests on a monstrous delusion: the idea that truth resides in the real world and can be picked out by a camera."<sup>36</sup> This "monstrous delusion" is of course a "monstrous" oversimplification, as I will show. It is a "delusion" which Fellini, for one, has never surrendered, although he has transformed it imaginatively. This

delusion has a history and a philosophical theory to support it.

According to Bela Balazs for example "The basis and possibility of an art of the film is that everyone and everything looks what it is."<sup>37</sup> To this assumption all anti-montage theorists generally agreed. Ferdinand Leger perhaps took this assumption most seriously, suggesting in the twenties that an attempt be made to film twenty four hours of life (an idea later resurrected by Andy Warhol), although he was certain the "people would run away horrified. . . ."<sup>38</sup> Cesare Zavattini, neo-realism's greatest screenwriter, later reduced the possibility to two hours, but his aesthetic was the same as Leger's. Rossellini perhaps proclaimed it most succinctly: "Things are. Why manipulate them?"

Neo-realism was founded not on a "delusion" but a faith, a faith perhaps best articulated by Andre Bazin:

The photographic image is the object itself, the object freed from the conditions of time and space that govern it. . . . photography does not create eternity as art does, it embalms time, rescuing it simply from its proper corruption. . . . the cinema is objectivity in time.<sup>39</sup>

"The camera," Bazin wrote, "cannot see everything at once" (for it is after all, as Brakhage noted, built to the specifications of the human moment), "but makes sure not to lose any part of what it chooses to see" (Bazin, I, 27). To Bazin therefore, and to the neo-realist movement he championed, movies are able to capture, within the limits of the human moment, the primal aseity of things and seek, in fact, to remain at the level of that aseity. For to neo-realism movies are not developmental. They "embalm time": knowing "only immanence," judging by "appearance only," they seek to be a "phenomenology," that is, a description (Bazin, II, 64-65). Bazin saw in "the revolutionary humanism" of neo-realism a refusal of symbolism, originating from its faith

that "the world is quite simply, before it is something to be condemned" (Bazin, II, 21).

But the world which presents itself to the neo-realist is not only beyond symbolism and condemnation; it lies beyond analysis as well. It is a way of "regarding things" which, by looking "on reality as a whole," seeks to restore something which was lost, as Bazin explains:

Only the impassive lens, stripping its object of all those ways of seeing it, those piled-up preconceptions, that spiritual dust and grime with which my eyes have covered it, is able to present it in all its virginal purity to my attention and consequently my love. By the power of photography, the natural image of a world that we neither know nor can know, nature at last does more than imitate art: she imitates the artist. (Bazin, I, 15)<sup>40</sup>

The phenomenology of neo-realism, like Merleau-Ponty's, sought therefore to rediscover this "presence to the world which is older than intelligence," to make it available to man's art. On the photographic level alone, Bazin thought movies to be a powerful weapon against outglossing of the visible. Movies could redeem the ordinary. And, unlike Youngblood's experimentalism, neo-realism's aesthetic respected, indeed almost worshipped, the earth's refusal.

And yet it was simply not enough, as Fellini intuited, to remain in the space it cleared. Although he respects its influence upon him, he has openly criticized its assumption and quantum-leaped beyond it cinematically. Neo-realism's orientation in the world is characteristic of the "first there is a mountain stage; it had made no Journey Out and Back. Fellini's radical emergence "on the other side of things," as Bazin put it, was, however, not a departure into any alien world, as I show. It was rather an evolution beyond the insideness of neo-realism, beyond the outsideness of "expanded cinema," in which mountains are not



mountains, into an openness in which the real is not his "little sister," nor an alien force, but rather his "great mother." Mimicry of her calls him.

Fellini himself is perhaps one of the best sources on both the genesis and demise of neo-realism. He has explained in an interview that the advent of neo-realism was due primarily to Italy's release at the end of the war, Italians had learned to "suck life from small things," and after the war they came to appreciate even more the simple realities of their own country which they saw with "the vital energy of a newborn child" (Levine, p. 80). Consequently, "reality assailed us in such an amazing, exciting way that the real world we were photographing was in itself a feat of the imagination" (Budgeon, p. 91). But the humility before life which resulted gradually became, according to Fellini, a denial of art, or, to put it another way, a reluctance to proceed with the work of mimicry, a slipping back into a repetition not yet transformed into a more subtle orientation: in a sense, a denial of vision and of the depth of the flesh. Fellini's distaste for this restrictive-ness is apparent:

A lot of talented imaginative young men have had their ardour dampened, felt themselves tied down, simply because of the weight which was given to the pronouncements of the leaders of neo-realism. While on the other hand totally ungifted people who, without the advent of this theory . . . would probably only have felt themselves called to give lectures, ventured upon filming their own presentations of reality with such humility that everyone was bored to tears. (Budgeon, p. 92)

Instead of humility before the camera Fellini suggests it would have been more proper to the nature of the medium to have realized that movies cannot simply be content with Rossellini's "Things are. Why manipulate them?" For "things" may be so glossed that no mere recording

of them can illuminate them, for recording would merely maintain the gloss.

As Andre Bazin clearly saw, neo-realism contained latent within it the possible evolution of an art of mimicry; his conception of the movies as the "asymptote of reality" is, in fact, surprisingly similar to Rilke's "visible become invisible." But the neo-realists themselves never fully sought this transformation. Believing themselves already in touch with the aseity of the flesh, the more than rational distortion did not enter their images, and without its weathering, their Saying was not strong enough to hint of the way. Taking the "real" as a given, as something which did not need to be discovered, they lapsed into idealization; they failed to discover the discovery that there is nothing to discover, that is, to narrate it.

And yet the failures of neo-realism do not, as Peter Wollen would have us believe, prove that it is a "monstrous delusion" to believe that the camera might be capable of capturing truth in the real world or condemn us to the alternative of the structuralist decipherment of signals. Certainly truth as propositional correctness the movie image will never show, but can it not catch and reveal the "truth" of aletheia? This questions returns us to a problem already posed above: what is the nature of the photographic image? How can it be a vehicle for what I have called Saying?

V. I. Pudovkin, the Russian director and theorist, insisted that film images were material only (a belief he borrowed from the experiments of Kuleshov) and lifeless or energyless until placed into synthesis in combination with other images.<sup>41</sup> Wollen, following the lead of Pudovkin and others, likewise sees a movie as a "text" and a "material object" which refers to no external code, but gains its "significance"

from "interrogation of its own code."<sup>42</sup> But is the photographic image so lifeless or energyless? Bazin, in contrast, seemed to think the interior quality of a thing was stamped on its exterior and the movies were "magical" because the photographic film could reveal this exterior in an unglossed way. And Bela Balazs saw photography's value in a similar fashion, extolling the movies' capability for "microphysiognomy's" revelations.<sup>43</sup> Bazin insisted that while painting solicits our critical faculties, the photographic image has "an irrational power to bear away our faith" (Bazin, I, 14). But our faith in what?

The photographic image summons our faith in the earth's Saying. Images, as Heidegger observes, are different from copies and imitations, for they are "visible inclusions of the alien in the sight of the familiar" (PLT, p. 226). And as Merleau-Ponty makes clear in The Visible and the Invisible, the invisible within the flesh is really light itself, that with which we see.<sup>44</sup> It is this light that appears alien in the image, for it is Being, the model for all that is instantaneous, the exemplar of the discovery that there is nothing to discover; all images celebrate its imminence: they Say it. To experience an image fully then is to see, as W. R. Robinson has shown, that "the image . . . passes the creation, including its creative potency, through it intact."<sup>45</sup> This creative potency, of which man attempts the mimicry, enters the image through the more than rational distortion; its shining is the image's Saying. The image is therefore the farthest thing from lifeless or energyless.

Oriental aesthetics has long understood all this and has even named this shining iki.<sup>46</sup> Iki is "a sensuous radiance," a "lively delight," through which the "supersensuous" is shown (OWL, p. 14).

Iki "delights" in that it carries one who experiences it into stillness, catches him. It is a hinting (which etymologically means "to grasp," "pursue," or "hunt," a word with which it shares a common origin). It is not a matter at all of stimulus and response. It takes one, is as instantaneous an exchange as breathing. As such it is a "gratuitous grace," "the breath of the stillness of luminous delight" (OWL, p. 44).

Iki, it should now be clear, is the aesthetic presence of what I have called the more than rational distortion. The iki of the movies replaces the "aura" which Walter Benjamin has shown belonged to works of art in the West prior to the "age of mechanical reproduction."<sup>47</sup> And, as I have tried to show, there is no need to think of the "super-sensuous" it reveals as anything otherworldly or mystical, since that "supersensuous" is literally the nonmomentousness of the earth. Iki's shining delights us into heeding that nonmomentousness, seeing it as a grace to be so trusted that man might "feel no need" and align, in mimicry, his moments with its instantaneousness, ceasing his endless forward thrust beyond its shelter. The experience of the more than rational distortion is subliminal. But iki, its reflection, Says and this Saying we experience tacitly, in life as well as art. The artist who becomes the vehicle for this Saying is therefore a "hermeneut" (Palmer, 155). Hermeneutics answers him.

Christian Metz has shown that the movies, although perhaps less "real" than theatre, existing as they do in a flat world which only creates the illusion of depth and, even then, not in accurate perspective, allow the spectator to give himself up all the more readily to their spectacle. The movies' "diegesis," or "statement of the case" (the word is derived from a Greek word for narration) is greater; they

use nearly all of what they are for "fictional purposes."<sup>48</sup> Unlike language, they possess no second articulation, no "cultural signification," unless it is imposed later on by the critical faculties.<sup>49</sup> This "spectacle" at which the movies excel is its Saying; it is this which gives to us what we don't know we want: the fictionalizing which accomplishes the work of mimicry. Fiction is aspring mimicry which, as Metz rightly suggests, is advanced to a new stage by the movies, whose Saying draws directly on the light, the earth, and the flesh, not just on man's derivative verbal genius as an artificer.

Man's personal and historical experience of the flesh has been, as Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger have both shown, one of "proximate distance," of bringing the horizon near while still allowing the depth of the visible to exist in itself. The movies as movies, as cinematic narrations of events over time and space by means of moving photograph images and due to our own innate human moment and the resulting phenomenon of persistence of vision, are the perfect image of this relationship to the world of "proximate distance." Although the diegesis of film includes an "unrealistic" achievement of perspective, since our eyes fail to correct the diminishment of size ratio for distant objects in a movie image as they do in the "real" world (and consequently see something far closer to the authentic first structure of perspective), the illusion thereby created is a spectacle approximating the primal aseity.<sup>50</sup> And cinematic perspective, such as it is, takes place in a flatness which itself is a bringing near of the world's depth.

The movies' diegesis then performs the essential function of Saying as I have outlined it above; it

releases the "is" into lighted freedom and therewith into the security of its thinkability. (OWL, p. 108)

Verbal language, under the sway of the ought, tends to stereotype the unique in order to make it available for the technologies of the logical machinery. But Saying is the true ground and source of language as an evolutionary development. As "the appropriating showing which disregards precisely itself, in order to free that which is shown, to its authentic appearance" (OWL, p. 131), Saying enacts mimicry, whether in a movie or in a poem, turning the oblivion of ought into the openness of is. Movies and language present therefore no unbridgeable dichotomy; they are united in a common effort when they actualize their true potential to carry out (through the means of the image and the word respectively) the work of what Heidegger called "inaugural naming" on which men as the "bees of the invisible" depend for their mimicry.

The function of language in the movies can no doubt be as the nemesis of the image. But the image and the word spring from the same source within the world's flesh and are not necessarily in eternal, Manichean opposition. Part of the Saying of a movie may be conveyed through the power of the word as well as through the iki of its images. One of the functions of a hermeneutics of film, as I have demonstrated in the preceding chapters, is to ascertain when verbal and visual Saying are complementary. But the movies may prove to be the "seed crystal" within which art and thought are brought together.

Poetry and thinking, Heidegger imagined, are parallels which intersect in the infinite (OWL, p. 90). It should be remembered that Heidegger understood thinking in a very special way. For him, thinking is not a means to acquire knowledge, but rather a means by which to cut "furrows into the soil of Being." It belongs to the way, to the "region" of the earth and never tries to go beyond. It is the opposite of method, which never heeds Saying, never knows the country in which

it travels toward its goal (OWL, 70-75). "Thinking," Heidegger observed, shares a common etymological source with "thanking." It is gracious therefore, trusting that its true function is, as Heidegger puts it so beautifully in "Conversation on a Country Path about Thinking," a "coming into the nearness of distance" (CCP, p. 68) in mimicry's openness. Seen in this way is it too much to suggest that the movies are at least the beginning of the intersection of poetry and thinking's parallel paths? For are they not at one and the same time a concrete adherence to the facts of the flesh, a thinking/thanking of them spectacularly and, by means of narrative realization, a poetic "making" of new possibilities: a "Celebration of the Light?"

<sup>1</sup>The immediate answer of many to this question is no. Georges Duhamel, for example, has rejected the movies outright because he insists that "I can no longer think what I want to think. My thoughts have been replaced by moving images." Quoted in Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Illuminations, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich, 1968), p. 240. See also the discussion of the theory of Roger Munier below.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Jonathan Cott, Conversations with Stockhausen (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), p. 185.

<sup>3</sup>Andrew Sarris, ed. Interviews with Film Directors, p. 35. My discussion of the effects of persistence of vision below owes much to Bergman's comments on its magic.

<sup>4</sup>For this explanation I am indebted to Gerald Mast, A Short History of the Movies (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971), pp. 18-19.

<sup>5</sup>A good introduction to the nature of subliminal perception can be found in Wilson Bryan Key's Subliminal Seduction (New York: New American Library, 1973), pp. 21-29. Such subliminal seductions in theatres can be accomplished either through the use of a tachistoscope, which flashes images at exposures of 1/3000 of a second, or through the projection of images with a light intensity below the conscious level.

<sup>6</sup>See Gene Youngblood, Expanded Cinema, p. 46.

<sup>7</sup>Uexkull theorises about the nature of the "moment" in both "A Stroll Through the Garden of Animals and Men," Instinctive Behavior,

ed. Claire Schiller (New York: International Universities Press, 1957) and Theoretical Biology (London: Kegan, Paul and Trench, 1926).

<sup>8</sup>That the so-called noumenal world is immense no scientist would doubt. See, for example, the illustrations of the relative proportion of visible light in comparison with the rest of the wave spectrum in Denis Postle's Fabric of the Universe (New York: Crown, 1976), p. 59 and Jacob Bronowski's The Ascent of Man, pp. 353-56.

<sup>9</sup>Bleibtreu, p. 17.

<sup>10</sup>Jaynes, p. 23.

<sup>11</sup>See Polanyi, The Tacit Dimension (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), pp. 3-25.

<sup>12</sup>Jaynes, pp. 22-23.

<sup>13</sup>Back to Methusaleh: a Metabiological Pentateuch (New York: Brentano's, 1923), p. xxv.

<sup>14</sup>Letters: 1910-1926, pp. 372-76.

<sup>15</sup>If Julian Jaynes' startling thesis is even remotely accurate, it seems that man's history has for the most part been devoid of consciousness anyway. Up until Homeric times, Jaynes argues, there is no evidence to support the existence of anything but a reactive orientation to the world. Seen in this light, consciousness might only be a momentary aberration in the development of life on earth and a return to instantaneous orientation, as I describe it here, a return to "normalcy."

<sup>16</sup>Letters to a Young Poet, p. 69 (my italics).

<sup>17</sup>For an excellent recent discussion of the nature of mimicry see Wolfgang Wickler, Mimicry in Plants and Animals (New York: World University Library, 1968).

<sup>18</sup>Shaw, p. xxvii.

<sup>19</sup>Or as Rilke described it brilliantly in a poem he had merely written in his notebooks (PLT, 99; quoted with permission of Harper & Row):  
 As Nature gives the other creatures over  
 to the venture of their dim delight  
 and in soil and branchwork grants none special cover,  
 so too our being's pristine ground settles our plight;  
 we are no dearer to it; it ventures us.  
 Except that we, more eager than plant or beast,  
 go with this venture, will it, adventurous  
 more sometimes than Life itself is, more daring  
 by a breath (and not in the least  
 from selfishness). . . . There, outside all caring,  
 this creates for us a safety--just there,  
 where the pure forces' gravity rules; in the end,  
it is our unshieldedness on which we depend,



and that, when we saw it threaten, we turned it  
so into the Open that, in widest orbit somewhere,  
where the Law touches us, we may affirm it. (my italics)

<sup>20</sup>For an account of Smith see The International Encyclopedia of Film, ed. Roger Manvell, et al., eds. (New York: Bonanza Books, 1972) and his own Cinebiology, (Baltimore, Pelican Books, 1941).

<sup>21</sup>Quoted in Roger Munier, "The Fascinating Image," Diogenes, No. 38 (1968), p. 93. All future references to this work will be cited in the text. Cendrars' perception recalls as well Rilke's depiction of the anemone in Sonnets to Orpheus, II, 5.

<sup>22</sup>The biological basis of the relativity of perception was a subject in which Albert Einstein showed a deep interest. In his conversations with Alexander Moszkowski, Einstein proposed that rates of perception are determined by the relative sense of time established by an animal's pulse beat. Our entire intellectual life, he tells Moszkowski, has a biological base. A rabbit's pulse is four times faster than a bull's, and, therefore, it perceives four times as quickly. If our pulse were speeded up a thousand times we would, Einstein suggests, probably be able to see a bullet in mid-air. If it were slowed down proportionately, we would be able to detect geological changes more easily than we would be able to see a flower unfolding. But since the rate of our perception remains remarkably constant, no such variations seem likely. Yet through the medium of the movies Smith's art makes present to us such momentous occasions ordinarily beyond human ken; Conversations with Einstein (New York: Horizon Press, 1970), pp. 60-64. Walter Benjamin, it should be noted, recognized the power of the movies to explore this realm, arguing that by showing to us "the necessities which rule our lives" on the perceptual level, they allow us to break open our "prison-world" and to explore "unconscious optics" in the same way that psychoanalysis allows a glimpse of unconscious impulses ("The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," pp. 238-39).

<sup>23</sup>Movies, after all, were once known as "bioscopes."

<sup>24</sup>Quoted in Geoffrey Hartman, The Unmediated Vision, p. 74. The Rilke poem in which it appears is "Gesang der Frauen und den Dichter."

<sup>25</sup>The phrase is, of course, from Walden.

<sup>26</sup>Bazin thought the force of the movies was "centrifugal," not focusing on man but rather throwing him outward into the frontiers which surround the screen; What is Cinema? Vol. 1, pp. 105-107. Ayfre believed that the movie image was a seed which produces fruit in man only in order to fertilize that which originally produced it (see Andrews, pp. 152-53). And Jean Mitry wrote that while "the novel is a narrative that organizes itself in the world, . . . the cinema is a world that organizes itself into a narrative" (Andrews, p. 208). And although he was not thinking specifically of the movies, Levi-Strauss believes, as Octavio Paz explains, that "it is nature which speaks with itself, through man and without his being aware." Consequently, "man is barely a moment in the message which nature sends and receives" (Claude Levi-Strauss, pp. 131-33). For a discussion of Munier, see below.

<sup>27</sup> In addition to the essay, "Fascinating Image," from which I draw my knowledge of Munier, he has published Contre L'Image (Paris: Gallimard, 1963).

<sup>28</sup> I discovered Munier's work only very late in my own research and writing, and I was startled to find another thinker whose vision of the movies was so close to mine, although the valuation we have put on that vision is in diametric opposition.

<sup>29</sup> "The Camera Eye, My Eye," The New American Cinema, ed. Gregory Battock (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1967), p. 214.

<sup>30</sup> Youngblood, pp. 67-8.

<sup>31</sup> Youngblood, p. 6.

<sup>32</sup> Irrational Man, p. 217.

<sup>33</sup> For a superb analysis of how various cultures come to accent certain events and ignore others, see Edward T. Hall, The Hidden Dimension (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966).

<sup>34</sup> See Phenomenon of Man (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), pp. 257-272.

<sup>35</sup> Sense and Nonsense (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 52.

<sup>36</sup> Wollen, p. 166.

<sup>37</sup> Theory of Film, p. 66.

<sup>38</sup> Quoted in Siegfried Kracauer, Theory of Film (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 64.

<sup>39</sup> What is Cinema? Vol. 1, p. 14.

<sup>40</sup> Because of this ability Bazin felt movies to be the "sesame" to unknown universes, an interesting observation considering that "sesame," a supposed magical word, is actually derived from "eidōs," a Greek word for form and for image.

<sup>41</sup> Cited in V. F. Perkins, Film as Film (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1972), pp. 22.

<sup>42</sup> Wollen, p. 162. As a result, Andrews has pointed out (p. 243), semiotics never seeks to learn anything from the art work; thus mimicry is short-circuited by it.

<sup>43</sup> Balazs, pp. 65-66.

<sup>44</sup> See Appendix Four.

<sup>45</sup> "If You Don't See You're Dead," p. 22.

<sup>46</sup> The term is discussed in "Dialogue Between an Inquirer and a Japanese Concerning Language," in OWL, pp. 14, 44.

<sup>47</sup> Benjamin defined "aura" as "the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be." It is destroyed by the "sense of the universal equality of things" which prevails in the modern world, best exemplified in intellectual pursuits like statistics (Benjamin, pp. 223-225).

<sup>48</sup> Film Language: A Semiotics of the Film (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 10-15.

<sup>49</sup> Metz, pp. 61-64.

<sup>50</sup> In nature, the size of an object decreases in proportion to the square of its distance from the viewer. The retinal image would thus find a man twenty feet away four times as small as a man ten feet away and a man forty feet away sixteen times smaller. But the mind corrects the message received and reduces the difference, making natural perspective less exaggerated. The mind sees distant objects in inverse ratio to the distance and not to the square of the distance; the man at twenty feet is a half and not a quarter the size of a man at ten feet. Since cameras record images according to the standards of the retina, the rule of the square of the distance prevails. And in a movie theatre, "we are unable to correct this 'distortion' as we would in the real world, since the cinema presents a special world external to us and outside our ordinary experience." Also, due to the phenomenon of "transfer of dimensions" changes in depth in a movie are experienced as changes in length and breadth. Things seem as if they stay in the same place and increase or decrease in size. This explanation is paraphrased from Ralph Stephenson and J. R. Debrix, The Cinema as Art (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969), pp. 44-48.

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- 1950: Luci Del Varieta (Variety Lights); co-directed with Alberto Lattuada.
- 1952: Lo Sciecco Bianco (The White Sheik).
- 1953: I Vitelloni (The Spivs).
- 1953: "Un agenzia matrimoniale" ("A Matrimonial Agency"); episode in Amore in Citta (Love in the City).
- 1954: La Strada (The Road).
- 1955: Il Bidone (The Swindlers).
- 1956: Le Notti Di Cabiria (The Nights of Cabiria).
- 1960: La Dolce Vita (The Sweet Life).
- 1962: "Le tentazioni del Dottor Antonio" ("The Temptations of Doctor Antonio"); episode in Boccaccio '70.
- 1963: Otto E Mezzo (8 1/2).
- 1965: Giulietta Degli Spiriti (Juliet of the Spirits).
- 1968: "Toby Dammit"; episode in Histoires Extraordinaires (Tales of Mystery).
- 1968: Fellini: A Director's Notebook.
- 1969: Fellini-Satyricon.
- 1970: I Clowns (The Clowns).
- 1972: Fellini's Roma.
- 1974: Amarcord (I Remember).
- 1976: Casanova.

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#### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

David Lee Lavery was born in Oil City, Pennsylvania, on August 27, 1949. He attended public school there and acquired his first two years of college education at Venango Campus, a branch campus of Clarion State College. In 1971 he graduated cum laude from Clarion in Clarion, Pennsylvania, with a major in Comprehensive English Education and a concentration in philosophy. He went on to graduate school at St. Cloud State University in St. Cloud, Minnesota, where he served for two years as a graduate teaching assistant, wrote a Master's thesis on "Surrealism in the Novels of Nathanael West," and received the M.A. degree in August of 1973. In September of that year he began Ph.D. work at the University of Florida, where he also served as a teaching assistant until June of 1975 and was responsible for organizing and teaching the English Department's first American Indian literature class. During the 1975-76 school year, he was employed at the College of St. Benedict, St. Joseph, Minnesota, where he taught composition and movies. In June of 1976 he returned to the University of Florida to complete his dissertation and served again as a teaching assistant.

He is married to the former Susan McGriff, with whom he is presently researching a book which they plan to write together entitled, "Mimicry: an Ethology of Imagination."



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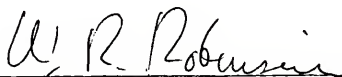
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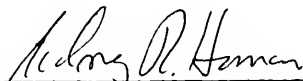
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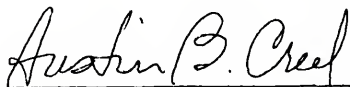
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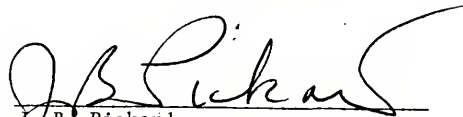
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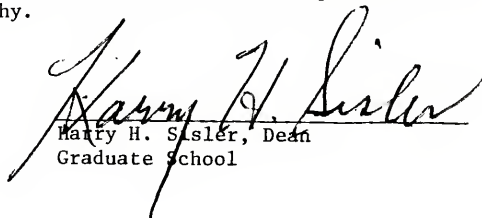
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