

INTIMATE ENUNCIATIONS: CARNIVAL AND APOCALYPSE IN FELLINI

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I. THE CARNIVALESQUE MODE: FROM PARODY TO MANNERISM

Carnival is a natural point of departure for a comment on any of Fellini's individual films or on Fellini's universe.¹ Characteristic motifs of carnival such as disproportionate human features, rampant feasts and orgies, vulgar language, and flagrant display of all bodily functions are marks by which a Fellini film is identified. While several of Fellini's films are governed by the carnivalesque mode more thoroughly than others, carnival lies at the core of Fellini's aesthetic vision. From one film to the next, the carnivalesque mode crystallized and became increasingly prominent, explicit, and shorn of alien ideas.

The carnivalesque mode reenacts through the mediation of literature, drama, cinema, or painting the social transformations that occur in carnival. Thus it is a mode of expression that affects the world of the spectators as immediately as it affects that of the characters. It triggers the collapse of both worlds, the real and the fictional. Carnival and the carnivalesque mode can be described as worldless because they undermine the foundations of real and fictional worlds. The building-blocks of real and fictional worlds comprise, I will assume, a transcendent lawgiving authority, internalized instances of that authority, and legally defined time and space.² Instead of the separate worlds of characters and spectators, the carnivalesque mode brings into existence a realm of anarchic freedom from transcendent and internalized authorities, and from the network of spatial and temporal categories that constitute real and fictional worlds.

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¹ Robert Stam accords a marginal place to Fellini in his discussion of cinematic renderings of the carnivalesque. His main examples are taken from the films of Bunuel and Godard. See ROBERT STAM, *REFLEXIVITY IN FILM AND LITERATURE* (1985) [hereinafter *REFLEXIVITY*]; ROBERT STAM, *SUBVERSIVE PLEASURES: BAKHTIN, CULTURAL CRITICISM, AND FILM* (Johns Hopkins University Press 1992) (1989) [hereinafter *SUBVERSIVE PLEASURES*].

² On social space and time as networks of boundaries that are laid down by the law among the living and between successive generations, and on the dependence of social time and space on the transcendence of sovereignty, see Lior Barshack, *Time and the Constitution*, 7 *ICON: INT'L J. CONST. L.* 553 (2009).

The overthrow of transcendent authority in the worlds of characters and spectators precipitates the disintegration of both worlds and propels a shift from representation to presence in the carnivalesque mode. The worldlessness, lawlessness, and playfulness of carnival engulf the spectators in an experience of things that precedes representation and which, I will argue, recalls Winnicott's notion of the potential space. Winnicott's theory offers one psychoanalytic account of the suspension and eventual refoundation of representation that occurs in carnival. Drawing selectively on Bakhtin's notion of carnival and on Winnicott's notion of the potential space, I will outline the contours of the carnivalesque mode as it developed throughout Fellini's work.

The most striking feature of the carnivalesque mode is the fading away of the interior and private realms. Participants in carnival are liberated from the burden of human psychology and reduced to their outward aspects. André Bazin observed that Fellini's "characters are never defined by their 'character' but exclusively by their appearance."³ Hence, "[e]vents do not 'happen' in Fellini's world: they 'befall' its inhabitants . . . the Fellinian character does not evolve; he ripens or at the most becomes transformed."⁴ While the predominance of appearance over "character" has become particularly evident in Fellini's later films, the observations made by Bazin with regard to Fellini's early period confirm the continuity and coherence of Fellini's work.

Bazin's observations on the primacy of the phenomenological in Fellini can be read into the theory of carnival. Bakhtin notes the externalizing function of the clown but fails to identify externalization as the underlying principle of carnival in general. The rogue, clown, and fool, Bakhtin writes,

can exploit any position they choose, but only as a mask They re-establish the public nature of the human figure: the entire being of characters such as these is, after all, utterly on the surface; everything is brought out on to the square, so to speak; their entire function consists in externalizing things.⁵

Elsewhere, Bakhtin notes that carnival is not limited to the public square but "also invaded the home."⁶ In fact, the externalization of human existence in carnival has little to do with the ordinary "publicness" of the square. As opposed to publicness, carnivalesque outwardness is obscene; while publicness presumes the existence of a

³ André Bazin, *Cabiria: The Voyage to the End of Neorealism*, in FEDERICO FELLINI: ESSAYS IN CRITICISM 94, 98 (Peter Bondanella ed., 1978). I will use the term "character" to designate both the flattened characters of carnival and the thick characters of conventional drama.

⁴ *Id.* at 95.

⁵ MIKHAIL M. BAKHTIN, THE DIALOGIC IMAGINATION 159-60 (Caryl Emerson & Michael Holquist trans., University of Texas Press 2004) (1981) [hereinafter DIALOGIC IMAGINATION].

⁶ MIKHAIL M. BAKHTIN, PROBLEMS OF DOSTOEVSKY'S POETICS 128 (Caryl Emerson ed. & trans., University of Minnesota Press 2003) (1984) [hereinafter PROBLEMS].

2010] CARNIVAL AND APOCALYPSE IN FELLINI 1021

private sphere shielded from the public gaze, carnival knows no distinction between private and public spheres.

The unity that lies behind the various manifestations of carnival consists in the primacy that they accord to appearances. Bakhtin famously argued that the “material bodily lower stratum” receives pride of place in carnival.⁷ Carnavalesque vulgarity is not merely a matter of indulgence in certain bodily pleasures but of their uninhibited display. *Satyricon*⁸ inaugurated a series of films in which the vulgar display of bodily pleasures is studied with unsparing comprehensiveness. In contrast to the disciplined body that the law circumscribes, carnival celebrates, according to Bakhtin, the open, constantly changing body. The feast thus becomes a primary instance and a general symbol of carnival.⁹ *Satyricon*,¹⁰ *Fellini’s Roma*,¹¹ and *Fellini’s Casanova*¹² feature lavish feasts, sometimes interrupted by dances in which training yields to convulsive, untutored movement. Spectacles of gluttony are accompanied in these films by scenes of collective debauchery. At the beginning of *Satyricon*,¹³ after Encolpio reclaims his slave boy and lover Gitone from the actor Vernachio, the two lovers pass through a red-light district, the ancient Roman Suburra quarter, where each of the numerous allies is dedicated to a different improbable perversion. In *Fellini’s Roma*,¹⁴ Fellini’s account of present-day Rome, the prostitutes flaunt their bodies in a carnivalesque parade for the appreciation of their clients. In *Fellini’s Casanova*,¹⁵ the itinerant libertine chances upon several aristocratic and plebeian orgies in the course of his travels, between his more intimate engagements.

The evaporation of the interior realm in carnival calls for the celebration of masks, décor, and artifice in general, alongside the display of bodily functions. The enjoyment of artifice in carnival can be largely identified with Bakhtin’s notion of carnivalesque *parody*, an aspect of carnival that complements the salience of the “bodily lower stratum.”¹⁶ Parody dwells on the preposterousness of masks and other

⁷ MIKHAIL BAKHTIN, *RABELAIS AND HIS WORLD* 368 (Hélène Iswolsky trans., Ind. Univ. Press 1984) (1965) [hereinafter *RABELAIS AND HIS WORLD*].

⁸ *SATYRICON* (Produzioni Europee Associates & Artistes Associes 1969).

⁹ See *RABELAIS AND HIS WORLD*, *supra* note 7, at 281.

¹⁰ *SATYRICON*, *supra* note 8.

¹¹ *FELLINI’S ROMA* (Ultra Films & Artistes Associes 1972).

¹² *FELLINI’S CASANOVA* (Produzioni Europee Associates 1976).

¹³ *SATYRICON*, *supra* note 8.

¹⁴ *FELLINI’S ROMA*, *supra* note 11.

¹⁵ *FELLINI’S CASANOVA*, *supra* note 12.

¹⁶ As Margaret Rose has shown in her comprehensive and illuminating work, the purpose of parody is not necessarily ridicule and mockery. However, Rose shows that Bakhtin’s notion of carnivalesque parody—like the notions of parody entertained by many of his contemporaries—is strongly associated with mockery, and hence largely interchangeable with burlesque and travesty. See MARGARET A. ROSE, *PARODY: ANCIENT, MODERN AND POST-MODERN* 169 (1993). On carnivalesque parody, see *PROBLEMS*, *supra* note 6, at 127. As a literary theorist, Bakhtin’s

artifices that humans fabricate in order to decorate themselves. The common premise of the vulgar and the parodic is the reduction of human existence to the level of appearances, the clinging to the surface of things. In the case of carnivalesque vulgarity the surfaces that are brought to the foreground are bodily; in the case of parody they are social and artificial.

Outside carnival, the presumption of an inner self, an inner character that dwells within the body, subordinates body to mask. By dismantling the inner self, carnival releases the body and the mask from each other's grip in a way that renders them equal in status as mere surfaces. In Fellini's films, body and artifice produce the same effect of tangible, coarse surfaces that seem to protrude outside the screen. They celebrate themselves in spectacular gestures asserting their independence from each other and from any invisible entity that might be thought to lie behind them. The actors' makeup, for example, is not intended in Fellini's films to be incorporated into the facial features of the actors in the customary, perfect fashion that suggests the marriage of body and social role. The makeup does not serve as the externalization of an interiority that binds together body and mask or of a character that resides comfortably within the body. Rather, its pronounced artificiality debunks disciplinary practices of internalization. Like the makeup of clowns, it is often exaggerated, peeling, badly done.

Another example of exaggerated artificiality that refutes the presumption of interiority is the affected manner of speech of many of Fellini's characters. Playfully ceremonious intonation, modulation and gesticulation, unusual pitch, and deliberately failed synchronization between the words heard on the soundtrack and the movement of the actors' lips defamiliarize speech and undermine any impression of sincerity. Fellini's characters relish in the extravagant artificiality of their vocal utterances. Žižek has pointed out that the characters of the silent film were bereft of interiority: Voice signified the introduction of interiority.¹⁷ Like overdone makeup, theatricalized speech challenges the presumption of interiority and confronts the spectators with the abyss that lies behind familiar masks.

It would be wrong, however, to describe the celebration of artificiality in Fellini's films as parodic. Fellini's evocations of excess of artifice are rarely subversive. (Only journalism is characterless enough to deserve parodic treatment: *The Clowns*,¹⁸ *Orchestra Rehearsal*,¹⁹ and *Fellini's Roma*²⁰ are parodies on the genre of

notion of parody primarily concerns the relation between texts; in carnival, however, parody extends to non-textual forms of mockery.

¹⁷ See THE PERVERT'S GUIDE TO CINEMA (Amoeba Film et al. 2009).

¹⁸ THE CLOWNS (Bavaria Film GmbH et al. 1970).

¹⁹ ORCHESTRA REHEARSAL (Albatros Produktion et al. 1979).

2010] CARNIVAL AND APOCALYPSE IN FELLINI 1023

documentary cinema and there is a parody of the genres of interview and reportage in *And the Ship Sails On*²¹ and *Intervista*.²²) Rather than parodic, Fellini's portrayal of the human indulgence in the fabrication of masks, ornaments, and façades is rooted in a manneristic vision of humanity. While carnivalesque parody, according to Bakhtin, ridicules social masks as preposterous artifices, mannerism is not mocking or critical. Mannerism in Fellini's films, playful as it may appear, conveys an ardent vindication of extravagance, inventiveness, and idiosyncrasy in human self-fashioning.

While mannerism is often associated with refinement and hence contrasted with vulgarity, carnival reveals their complicity. Both mannerism and vulgarity defy standard notions of humaneness in which the natural and artificial are adjusted to each other through the mediation of an inner self. Both disavow inwardness in favor of an autoerotic indulgence in appearances. In *Fellini's Roma*,²³ the formal analogy between the parade of the prostitutes and the fashion show featuring the last word in the design of ecclesiastical regalia hints at the alliance between the vulgar and the manneristic. Fellini's sketch from the time of shooting *La dolce vita*²⁴ of Anita Ekberg dressed as a priest anticipates this analogy.

The term mannerism is apt to account for Fellini's distinct rendering of carnival, because it covers the exaggerated affectations that can be found in all carnivals, the idealization of individual eccentricity that lies at the core of Fellini's vision of humanity, and the aesthetics of the mannerist style in painting that many of Fellini's frames seem to follow.²⁵ The indulgence in artificiality has been identified as one of the defining formal and thematic features of mannerism.²⁶ The preoccupation with artificiality anchors the mannerist style in the spirit of carnival, together with other visual characteristics of carnival that can be found in mannerist painting. The expressive power of mannerism in painting and other arts may be partly explicable in light of the

²⁰ FELLINI'S ROMA, *supra* note 11.

²¹ AND THE SHIP SAILS ON (Films A2 et al. 1983).

²² INTERVISTA (Aljosha Productions et al. 1987).

²³ FELLINI'S ROMA, *supra* note 11.

²⁴ LA DOLCE VITA (Gray Films et al. 1960).

²⁵ Bakhtin too considers the exhibition of eccentricities as one of the principles of carnival. See PROBLEMS, *supra* note 6, at 123.

²⁶ Fellini's compositions can be, and have been, equally traced to Baroque and surrealist painting. See GENEVIÈVE AGEL, LES CHEMINS DE FELLINI 14-15 (Cerf 1956). Geneviève Agel, the author of the first book published on Fellini, observed in 1956 that Fellini's images exhibit the defining characteristics of the Baroque as opposed to the "classical" style in painting. See *id.* The characteristics of Baroque that Agel found in Fellini's films are in fact common to Baroque and mannerism. See *id.* They include dynamism (and chaos), picturesqueness, open as opposed to closed form, and incomplete illumination of objects. See *id.* In an interview with Agel, Fellini described himself as surrealist in the sense that Giotto, Botticelli, Bosch, Breughel, and Ucello were. See *id.* at 94.

anthropology of carnival. Characteristics of mannerist painting that were listed by Walter Friedlaender and subsequent historians of mannerism, and which recall the visual repertoire of carnival, include the violation of the “natural” proportions of the body, a preference for twisted “unnatural” poses, excess in ornamentation, and the destruction of objective space.²⁷ The overall effect of the devices of the mannerist style is one of “artificiality and affectation.”²⁸ Fellini makes ample use of visual motifs such as excess of ornamentation, disproportionate human figures, and unprovoked and unconventional bodily movements. The bizarre features, overdone ornamentation, and twisted poses that critics of mannerism (and of Fellini) deemed “unnatural” are unlawful rather than unnatural: They attest to the emancipation of the body from a legal regime that transformed it into a servant of the soul.

II. CARNIVALESQUE WORLDLINESS AND WORLDLESSNESS

A. *The Collapse of the Fictional World*

In Trimalchio’s banquet, various characters face the camera as stationary as statues. When they do not merely pose before the camera, Fellini’s characters are still exhausted by their masks and mannerisms. The space in which they move is emptied of psychology and narrative. Fellini devised his work process to ensure the superficiality of his characters. Characters took shape in casting sessions, in which Fellini interviewed or merely inspected strange-looking people, and in Fellini’s drawings, executed in the sketchy, two-dimensional style of the comic strip. Fellini’s actors often described him as puppeteer and themselves as marionettes, a description which Fellini reluctantly confirmed.²⁹ Fellini’s instructions to his actors were primarily gestural and choregraphical. He was known for his methods of thwarting the attempts of actors to construct and realize a whole “character,” such as denying actors access to the script.

As marionettes, Fellini’s characters are allegories for social reality or, in Fellini’s own words, archetypes.³⁰ As in *commedia dell’arte*,

²⁷ Friedlaender argued that the “stress on surfaces” in the mannerist representation of bodies implies the unreality of the represented bodies, and is accompanied by the destruction of a rational, unambiguous space: “[S]pace, if it is present at all apart from the volumes, is not pushed to the point where it produces an effect of reality.” See WALTER FRIEDLAENDER, *MANNERISM AND ANTI-MANNERISM IN ITALIAN PAINTING* 9 (1957).

²⁸ See Craig Hugh Smyth, *Mannerism and Maniera*, in *READINGS IN ITALIAN MANNERISM* 69, 94 (Liana De Girolami Cheney ed., 1997).

²⁹ FEDERICO FELLINI, *JE SUIS UN GRAND MENTEUR: ENTRETIEN AVEC DAMIEN PETTIGREW* 125 (L’Arche 1994).

³⁰ Fellini made the point in a conversation with Germaine Greer, as reported by Greer:

2010] CARNIVAL AND APOCALYPSE IN FELLINI 1025

several stock characters reappear in different films. The characters' preoccupation with masquerade deprives the fictional world of depth, center of gravity, and definite contours. The repudiation of interiority dissolves the fictional world—fictional space as well as fictional time—in the same way that the street carnival destroys the social world. Like the shrunk or fragmented space of mannerist painting, the space in which Fellini's characters move is denied an objective existence. The fragmentation of space is accomplished, for example, by Fellini's relatively scarce use of establishing shots and his resort to abrupt interruptions and rapid transitions from one space to the next.³¹ The time in which Fellini's masquerade takes place is as unreal as the space it occupies. Fellini's characters exist in an eternal present, outside any significant temporal ordering dictated by history or by the logic of a plot. Characters and costumes of different historical periods intermingle in several films.

The disintegration of the fictional world in Fellini's films led imitators and interpreters with sentimental inclinations to place Fellini's characters in a shiny realm of innocent, childish fantasy. However, Fellini's characters are far from being ethereal. Their ongoing dealings and negotiations with their insubordinate bodies endow them with concrete presence. In his defense of *La strada*,³² Bazin noted that the uncinematographic nature of Fellini's art has to do with the experience of immediate presence that it occasions.³³ The worldlessness of Fellini's characters, the collapse of a self-enclosed fictional world that could have been their own, renders them supremely real rather than angelic. In a remark on Petronius's characters, Bakhtin captured the blend of worldlessness and worldliness that such archetypal characters exhibit: "We are compelled to speak of something like a *realistic emblematic*. The total makeup of the image itself remains thoroughly realistic, but concentrated and compacted in it are so many essential and major aspects of life that its meaning far outstrips all spatial, temporal and sociohistorical limits"³⁴ Fellini's characters too can be

I asked him why everything has to be faked Why does he not make his film in a real asylum with a real garden surrounded by real fields? He says, "Because it is not an asylum, but the asylum; not a garden, but the garden; not a wheat field, but the one, the only, the archetypal wheat field."

Germaine Greer, *Fellinissimo*, in PERSPECTIVES ON FEDERICO FELLINI 225, 238 (Peter Bondanella & Cristina Degli-Esposti eds., 1993).

³¹ On establishing shots and filmic space, see PETER BONDANELLA, THE CINEMA OF FEDERICO FELLINI 170 (1992).

³² LA STRADA (Janus Films & Ponti/De Laurentiis Productions 1954).

³³ Bazin, *La strada*, in FEDERICO FELLINI: ESSAYS IN CRITICISM, *supra* note 3, at 54. For an account of Fellini's departure from conventional representation that differs from my own, see Frank Burke, *Federico Fellini: Reality/Representation/Signification*, in FEDERICO FELLINI: CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES 26 (Frank Burke & Marguerite R. Waller eds., 2002).

³⁴ DIALOGIC IMAGINATION, *supra* note 5, at 223.

described as emblems incarnate. They have a capacity for self-authentication, for producing themselves as presences, that stems from their dual nature as allegories and tangible bodies.

As living bodies, Fellini's characters do not display the cold and sterile beauty that belongs to the realm of childish fantasy. As allegorical images bereft of interiority, they cannot occupy a life-like fictional world. They did not come into being through a process of fictionalization because, as iconic images, they precede in principle artistic invention and are anyway incapable of being involved in fictional action. Instead of planning and acting, they are exclusively concerned with masquerade and with handling their unruly bodies. Putting on and adjusting their masks in front of the spectators, the characters lose their fictional status and acquire an irresistible realness. One aspect of the iconic and hence self-authenticating nature of Fellini's characters concerns the relations between characters and actors. For Fellini, casting meant primarily a search for living emblems. Several characters in his films are named after the actors that play them. Externalization entails the identity of actors and characters in carnival. While a single person can harbor two internal worlds, the reduction of identity to appearance merges the actor and the role.

The characters' reach outside the boundaries of the fictional world is a feature of the carnivalesque.³⁵ Suspension of disbelief is replaced by another attitude toward the characters which combines credulity and marvel. There is neither a fictional world nor a story to disbelieve; there are living emblems, and their presence is irrefutable. The characters step outside the screen and seem to invade the world of the spectators. In some cases they even seem to address the spectators: the advocate in *Amarcord*³⁶ and Orlando, the journalist, in *And the Ship Sails On*³⁷ are caricatured, self-important narrators who provide the spectators with information and commentary on other characters. The encounter between characters and spectators does not take place in the ordinary world inhabited by the spectators, since in carnival the fictional and "real" worlds fuse into something else, the plane of carnival itself. The carnivalesque fusion of the real and the fictional is particularly evident in Fellini's pseudo-documentaries, such as *Intervista*,³⁸ *The Clowns*,³⁹ and *Fellini's Roma*,⁴⁰ where some of the episodes are presented at the same time as real life and made up.

In relation to the world of everyday social interaction, the plane of

³⁵ As Bakhtin writes, "carnival knows neither stage nor footlights." PROBLEMS, *supra* note 6, at 128.

³⁶ AMARCORD (FC Productions et al. 1974).

³⁷ AND THE SHIP SAILS ON, *supra* note 21.

³⁸ INTERVISTA, *supra* note 22.

³⁹ THE CLOWNS, *supra* note 18.

⁴⁰ FELLINI'S ROMA, *supra* note 11.

2010] CARNIVAL AND APOCALYPSE IN FELLINI 1027

carnival is marked by heightened realness because it unveils the artificiality of the masks and social categories that coordinate everyday interaction. When carnival is channeled through literature or cinema the encounter between characters and spectators is in a sense imaginary. However, this encounter loses none of the superior realness of carnival by being imaginary because the ordinary distinction between the real and the imaginary is suspended in carnival. The spectators can fully participate in carnival and in the encounter with the characters because the characters and events of carnival are not situated in objective time and space within a separate, well-defined, fictional world. The timelessness and worldlessness of carnival allow for real participation of the spectators. The “carnival sense of the world”⁴¹ and the accompanying attitudes of masquerade and contemplation engulf the spectators. To conclude, the carnivalesque mode cannot be situated in a world, real or fictional, nor in the otherworldly, immaterial realm of fantasy. It transports characters and spectators to the realm of carnival in which objective time and space dissolve in order to give way to a privileged encounter with the real.

As a sphere that defies classification as real or fictional, and as an experience of immediate presence, carnival is analogous to Winnicott’s potential space.⁴² Like carnival, the potential space is located neither in the inner world of participants nor in the external world of everyday life, but in an intermediate realm that precedes the separation between the two. In the potential space and in carnival the merger of the internal and the external occurs through absorption in play. Both are spaces of foundation or re-foundation: According to Winnicott, the potential space conditions access to reality and representation.

According to Winnicott, the potential space emerges with the loosening of the primary merger of mother and child. The objects and gestures that occupy the potential space function for the child as instances of “not-me.” They also exist as objects for the mother to the effect that they acquire a degree of objectivity. At the same time, the child’s total control over these objects, an omnipotence confirmed by

⁴¹ PROBLEMS, *supra* note 6, at 172.

⁴² Winnicott developed the idea of the potential space in *PLAYING AND REALITY* (Routledge 2005) (1971). In his account of Winnicott’s theory, Axel Honneth describes the suspension of the distinction between the real and the fictional in the potential space, and he refers to the “ontological ambiguity” of transitional objects. Honneth writes:

For Winnicott, the key to explaining the function of these transitional objects is the fact that the child’s partners to interaction also situate the objects in a domain of reality, with regard to which the question of fiction or reality becomes unimportant. . . . Because they are ontologically ambiguous in nature, the child can actively use them to keep omnipotence fantasies alive, even after the experience of separation, and can simultaneously use them to creatively probe reality.

AXEL HONNETH, *THE STRUGGLE FOR RECOGNITION: THE MORAL GRAMMAR OF SOCIAL CONFLICTS* 102 (1995).

the mother, makes the potential space continuous with the inner world. This, according to Winnicott, is the defining ambiguity of transitional phenomena. The confirmation of omnipotence in the potential space replaces the absolute availability of the mother in the early phase of merger. Thus, the mother plays a dual role in the potential space: She confirms fantasies of omnipotence in relation to transitional phenomena and is at the same time the source of these fantasies in the earlier stage of merger. While omnipotence is continually confirmed, it is now asserted *vis-à-vis* transitional phenomena, and no longer in relation to the mother. The mother's responsiveness to the child's fantasies gradually establishes the child's capacity to accept reality and representation. According to Winnicott, the potential space does not vanish with the acceptance of reality. It remains throughout life the site of creation and cultural experience.

Regardless of the general strengths and weaknesses of Winnicott's theory and doubts concerning its capacity to account for the realm of culture in general, the concept of the potential space sheds light on carnival and the carnivalesque mode. Winnicott's concept designates a realm of experience that precedes the surrender to reality and representation. It captures the phenomenon of a play that drives the subject outside itself in a way that blurs boundaries between the inner and outer worlds, and consequently between the real and the fictional.⁴³ Carnival plays out the "ontological" excess and ambiguity of transitional phenomena: The mask is an object of play that can be identified at the same time as me and not-me. The emptying of

⁴³ Fellini's carnivalesque rejection of everyday notions of objectivity in favor of a higher sense of reality was not confined to his films. The Italian psychoanalyst Simona Argentieri described masquerade as part of Fellini's everyday life and traced it to a "legitimate illusion of omnipotence in the origins of psychism." Simona Argentieri, *Magic and Falsehood*, in FELLINI AMARCORD 24 (2001). Fellini's fidelity to this "legitimate illusion," which entails the collapse of real and fictional worlds alike, animated his art as much as his life. Argentieri's discussion calls for extensive quotation:

[Fellini] earned a reputation as a "grand liar," not for his celebrated ability to daydream, nor for the unmistakably oneiric quality of his imagination. Rather he was a great liar precisely because his lies were white ones, bound up with practical issues and apparently insignificant every-day events: an address, a date, a school year, an anecdote lifted from someone else's store of memories and then recounted as his own. There was never any sense to these lies, far less a purpose, an ulterior motive. Which is what makes it impossible to find an external clue to distinguish the true from the false in his numerous interviews, memoirs, revelations and confessions. He was a liar but not an impostor, who uses lies to build a false image of himself, albeit to serve reality. . . .

In infancy, the ability to lie is not primarily a means to perpetrate deceit; its purpose is rather to win the right to secrecy from intrusive all-knowing adults; and it also provides an opportunity to postpone the moment of having to distinguish between everyday life and dreams. . . . The origins of Fellini's untruths should certainly be sought in this primary creativity, in the archaic area of the self and the legitimate illusion of omnipotence in the origins of psychism.

2010] CARNIVAL AND APOCALYPSE IN FELLINI 1029

interiority in carnival renders the ontological ambiguity of the mask radical.

B. *Filmmaking as Participation*

Bakhtin noted that Rabelais's book is not *about* carnival but an active contribution *to* carnival. In his films Fellini presents filmmaking as a form of participation in carnival as play and a process of collective self-reflection.⁴⁴ Artistic traditions that aspired to remain close to carnival have always foregrounded the artificiality of works of art.⁴⁵ A large variety of means that were used in literature, drama, and the visual arts for trumpeting the artificiality of artworks can be found in Fellini's films. Viktor Shklovsky famously argued that the digressive structure of *Tristram Shandy* plays a role in conveying the artificiality of the novel.⁴⁶ Many commentators on Fellini emphasized the open, non-teleological, almost arbitrary structure of his films. Bazin writes:

Fellini, I think, brings the neorealist revolution to its point of perfection when he introduces a new kind of script, the scenario lacking any dramatic linking, based as it is, to the exclusion of all else, on the phenomenological description of the characters. In the films of Fellini, the scenes that establish the logical relations, the significant changes of fortune, the major points of dramatic articulation, only provide the continuity links, while the long descriptive sequences, seeming to exercise no effect on the unfolding of the "action" proper, constitute the truly important and revealing scenes.⁴⁷

Alongside open-ended structure, Fellini employs devices that served mannerist painters to accentuate artificiality: "unnatural,"

⁴⁴ Bakhtin insisted on the philosophical and contemplative dimension of the satirical and carnivalesque traditions. See PROBLEMS, *supra* note 6, at 115. Later he explains: "[C]arnivalistic categories are not *abstract thoughts* about equality and freedom, the interrelatedness of all things or the unity of opposites. No, these are concretely sensuous ritual-pageant 'thoughts' experienced and played out in the form of life itself . . ." *Id.* at 123.

⁴⁵ In his essay *Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting*, Brecht advocated reflexivity as an alienation effect that defamiliarizes everyday social conditions. Brecht's concept of defamiliarization captures the essence of carnivalesque parody; Brecht himself associated reflexivity with popular and festive theater. See Bertolt Brecht, *Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting*, in BRECHT ON THEATRE: THE DEVELOPMENT ON AN AESTHETIC 91 (John Willett ed. & trans., 1964). In literary theory, the issue of reflexivity has been particularly developed in critical works on Cervantes, Rabelais, and Sterne. See VIKTOR SHKLOVSKY, *The Novel as Parody: Sterne's Tristram Shandy*, in THEORY OF PROSE 147 (Benjamin Sher trans., 1990). On reflexivity in the cinema, see REFLEXIVITY, *supra* note 1; CHRISTIAN METZ, L'ÉNONCIATION IMPERSONNELLE, OU LE SITE DU FILM (1991).

⁴⁶ SHKLOVSKY, *supra* note 45.

⁴⁷ Bazin, *supra* note 3, at 100. On the open-ended structure of Fellini's films, see also the essays by Harcourt, Moravia, and Rosenthal in FEDERICO FELLINI: ESSAYS IN CRITICISM, *supra* note 3.

choreographed movement and an unrealistic spatial organization in which “the volumes of the bodies more or less displace the space” instead of being located within an ordered, preexisting space.⁴⁸ The oneiric scenes of *Eight and a Half*,⁴⁹ *Juliet of the Spirits*,⁵⁰ and *Toby Dammit*⁵¹ readily come to mind, but also in episodes that are not introduced as dreams or hallucinations space and movement are distorted in the face of archetypal presences. Such episodes include, among many others, Fellini’s reconstruction of his childhood impressions of the circus in the opening shots of *The Clowns*,⁵² and the apparition of the ocean liner *Rex* before the expectant inhabitants of Rimini in *Amarcord*.⁵³ Open-ended structure and the melting away of objective space embed in Fellini’s films references to the filmmaking process as a form of participation in carnival and at the same time reflect the fact that in carnival there is no objective and self-enclosed world to represent in the first place.

Fellini’s sets are usually schematic and illustrative like Fellini’s own drawings and unlike more conventional, imposing, architectonic scenographies that are intended to create an impression of reality.⁵⁴ The sea in *Fellini’s Casanova*⁵⁵ and *City of Women*⁵⁶ is immediately recognized as a thin, unfolded nylon sheet, gleaming as it is undulated by Fellini’s technicians, the sort of ploy that might be used in a children’s theater. In *And the Ship Sails On*⁵⁷ all apparitions of nature—the moon, the sea, the island, the wistful rhinoceros—are radiantly artificial. The Austro-Hungarian battleship is instantly recognized as a magnified plastic toy. Again we find here a combined reference to the filmmaking process and to the worldlessness of carnival. In several films, the filmmaking apparatus is revealed to the spectators. Noises that are made by the studio equipment are sometimes integrated into the soundtrack.⁵⁸ In *And the Ship Sails On*⁵⁹ and in the pseudo-documentary films some of the cameras on the set are captured in the frame.

Fellini’s foregrounding of the film’s artificiality is carried out not

⁴⁸ On space in Italian mannerism, see FRIEDLAENDER, *supra* note 27, at 8.

⁴⁹ EIGHT AND A HALF (Cineriz 1963).

⁵⁰ JULIET OF THE SPIRITS (Federiz 1965).

⁵¹ TOBY DAMMIT (Cocinor 1968).

⁵² THE CLOWNS, *supra* note 18.

⁵³ AMARCORD, *supra* note 36.

⁵⁴ On Fellini’s taste for “non-architectonic” sets that “rely on framing and light,” see TULLIO KEZICH, FEDERICO FELLINI: HIS LIFE AND WORK 292 (Minna Proctor trans., 2006) (2002).

⁵⁵ FELLINI’S CASANOVA, *supra* note 12.

⁵⁶ CITY OF WOMEN (Gaumont & Opera Film Produzione 1980).

⁵⁷ AND THE SHIP SAILS ON, *supra* note 21.

⁵⁸ For example, in the bathroom scene at the beginning of *Eight and a Half*. On the device of “montrer le dispositif,” see METZ, *supra* note 45, at 85.

⁵⁹ AND THE SHIP SAILS ON, *supra* note 21.

2010] *CARNIVAL AND APOCALYPSE IN FELLINI* 1031

only through familiar and relatively unambiguous devices. It is repeated in numerous scenes by means of delicately awkward treatment of details. The profession of artificiality is not intended to reinforce or weaken the illusion of reality. Rather, its purpose is to disclaim representation altogether. It situates the artist as an active and immediately present participant in the plays of carnival. When Lina Wertmüller asked Fellini for a general advice at the beginning of her career as director, Fellini encapsulated the director's craft in a single guiding idea: to imagine while making a film that one were telling a story or a joke to a close friend.⁶⁰

III. IMPERSONAL ENUNCIATION AND BAKHTINIAN POLYPHONY

A. *Impersonal Enunciation*

In contrast to the personal authorial presence that characterizes the carnivalesque mode, the construction of an enclosed fictional world in conventional cinematic representation presumes the existence of an absent and impersonal point of view. Derrida's account of the absent, semi-divine authority that governs the theatre stage applies to cinema as well:

The stage is theological for as long as its structure . . . comports the following elements: an author-creator who, absent and from afar, is armed with a text and keeps watch over, assembles, regulates the time or the meaning of representation, letting this latter represent him as concerns what is called the content of his thoughts, his intentions, his ideas.⁶¹

Bakhtin described the transcendent point of view in literature using optical metaphors that render his account readily applicable to cinema:

[T]he construction of [the objective] authorial world with its points of view and finalizing definitions presupposes a fixed external position, a fixed authorial field of vision. . . .

. . . .

. . . The direct and unmediated power to mean belongs only to the authorial point of view lying at the base of the construction; everything else is merely its object.⁶²

In carnival, the external authority described by Derrida is dethroned. There is no fictional world for it to govern, and the characters that move

⁶⁰ See *THE MAGIC OF FELLINI* (3DD Entertainment 2002) (interview with Lina Wertmüller in Carmen Piccini's documentary).

⁶¹ JACQUES DERRIDA, *The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation*, in *WRITING AND DIFFERENCE* 235 (Alan Bass trans., University of Chicago Press 1978).

⁶² *PROBLEMS*, *supra* note 6, at 52, 57.

and pose on the screen assume an iconic dimension that challenges authorial claims in relation to them.

In conventional cinematic representation, transcendent authority endows fictional worlds with depth and unity since it structures them as the unfolding of a certain grand design. It provides fictional worlds with boundaries that are defined by the contours of its gaze. It validates the laws that found social practices and institutions in the fictional world. It also governs the inner worlds of characters and enjoys optical omnipotence; its unobstructed gaze is the guarantee of objectivity in the fictional world. One of the roles of that superior authority is to grant or deny credibility to the various voices and points of view through which a fictional world is introduced. Francesco Casetti assigned the superior point of view that distinguishes credible from unreliable points of view in film to the cinematic *enunciator*.⁶³ Like Casetti, Christian Metz based his theory of cinema on the linguistic concept of enunciation. While engaging with the intricacies of this theoretical concept, Metz provided also an intuitive characterization of the instance of the cinematic enunciator:

The spectator perceives images which have obviously been selected (they could have been other images) and arranged (their order could have been different). In a sense, he is leafing through an album of predetermined pictures, and it is not he who is turning the pages but some "master of ceremonies," some "grand image-maker" (*grand imagier*) who . . . is first and foremost the film itself as a linguistic object (since the spectator always knows that what he is seeing is a film), or more precisely a sort of "potential linguistic focus" situated somewhere behind the film, and representing the basis that makes the film possible.⁶⁴

The figure of the cinematic enunciator emerges from Metz's and Casetti's accounts as the instance that puts together the cinematic images and guarantees objectivity in the fictional world. In literary theory, the abstract person who grants and denies credibility to narrators is known as the implied author. The discussions surrounding the literary concept of the implied author shed light on the nature of the cinematic enunciator, especially with regard to its relations with the film's auteur and with personal points of view and narrating voices within the film. Following Wayne Booth, Seymour Chatman

⁶³ Francesco Casetti, *Antonioni and Hitchcock: Two Strategies of Narrative Investment*, 15 *SUBSTANCE* 69, 69-86 (Luciana Bohne trans., 1986). For a discussion of Casetti's article, see ROBERT STAM, ROBERT BURGOYNE & SANDY FLITTERMAN-LEWIS, *NEW VOCABULARIES IN FILM SEMIOTICS: STRUCTURALISM, POST-STRUCTURALISM AND BEYOND* 110-12 (1992).

⁶⁴ CHRISTIAN METZ, *FILM LANGUAGE: A SEMIOTICS OF THE CINEMA* 21 (Michael Taylor trans., 1947). In his later work on impersonal enunciation in the cinema, Metz insists on identifying of the enunciator with the film itself, rather than with anything behind or above it. See METZ, *supra* note 45.

2010] CARNIVAL AND APOCALYPSE IN FELLINI 1033

distinguished the implied author, in literature and cinema alike, from both narrator and author. Unlike the author who is a real historical person, the implied author is a fictive instance. As Wayne Booth has shown, the attitudes and values of the implied author—the governing values of a work—may differ from those of the real person who happens to be the author. Booth likened the implied author to an “official scribe,” a metaphor that is equally applicable to the cinematic enunciator.⁶⁵ Like the “official scribe” in literature, in conventional cinematic representation the enunciator—Metz’s *grand imagier*—is, in Metz’s words, a “master of ceremonies,” that is, an impersonal, idealized figure rather than a real person.

The distinction between the implied author, or cinematic enunciator, and the narrator is thornier than that between the implied author and the author. In contrast to the narrator, Chatman writes, the implied author does not have a voice: “Unlike the narrator, the implied author can *tell* us nothing. He, or better, *it* has no voice, no direct means of communicating. It instructs us silently, through the design of the whole, with all the voices, by all the means it has chosen to let us learn.”⁶⁶ Moreover, Chatman following Booth anchors the distinction between the implied author and the narrator in the capacity of the former to undermine the reliability of the latter. If narrators can be found unreliable, Booth argued, there must be a higher authority that perceives and indicates their unreliability.

In an essay on impersonal narration in the cinema, Robert Burgoyne criticized the distinction between the implied author and the narrator. Burgoyne argues that the problem of unreliable narrators does not necessitate the postulation of the implied author.⁶⁷ The problem of unreliability can be dealt with by introducing a hierarchy between narrators. Only personal narrators can be charged with unreliability. An impersonal narrator is always credible and thus capable of pointing to the unreliability of personal voices. As long as the narrator does not exhibit personal characteristics its reliability is not in doubt.⁶⁸ Since

⁶⁵ WAYNE BOOTH, *THE RHETORIC OF FICTION* 70 (1961).

⁶⁶ SEYMOUR CHATMAN, *STORY AND DISCOURSE: NARRATIVE STRUCTURE IN FICTION AND FILM* 148 (1978). On the implied author, see SHLOMITH RIMMON-KENAN, *NARRATIVE FICTION* (2d ed. 1983).

⁶⁷ Robert Burgoyne, *The Cinematic Narrator: The Logic and Pragmatics of Impersonal Narration*, 42 *J. FILM & VIDEO* 3 (1990). Burgoyne’s argument rests on Marie-Laure Ryan’s article, *The Pragmatics of Personal and Impersonal Fiction*, 10 *Poetics* 517 (1981).

⁶⁸ Burgoyne writes:

In creating the fictional world, the impersonal narrator produces a type of discourse that is read directly as the facts of the “real world” of the fictional universe. The impersonal narrator’s lack of human personality allows the viewer to imagine that he or she is confronting the fictional universe directly In producing the facts of the fictional world, the impersonal narrator creates a universe that, once established, cannot be revoked, for this discourse provides the very basis of the fictional world, forming the material building blocks of the fictional universe.

impersonal narration is the fundamental mode of narration in cinema, there is always an authority that can scrutinize the reliability of personal voices and points of view in the film. Consequently, Burgoyne concluded, “[i]mpersonal narration . . . eliminates the need for the category of the implied author.”⁶⁹

The result of Burgoyne’s argument is that the superior authority that guarantees objectivity within fictional worlds in the cinema is the same instance that narrates them. It is an impersonal narrator. Chatman acknowledges the weight of Burgoyne’s argument but continues to insist on the distinction between the instances of the narrator and the implied author, in cinema as in literature.⁷⁰ Metz, unlike both Chatman and Burgoyne, is reluctant to transplant the concepts of narrator and narration from literature to cinema. Instead, Metz postulates the impersonal enunciator as the ultimate instance that manipulates the cinematic images.⁷¹ For the present purpose of introducing the transcendent authority that hovers above fictional worlds in conventional cinematic representation, it is not necessary to tackle the contested question of whether the impersonal enunciator, or implied author, addresses the spectators in the capacity of a narrator in addition to its other functions. Whether equipped with a narrating “voice” or not, the impersonal enunciator orchestrates the images and voices through which spectators are acquainted with the fictional world, determines the governing ideology of the film, guarantees objectivity within the fictional world, and passes judgment on personal points of view in the film.

B. *The Enunciator Dethroned*

Fellini’s films remove the enunciator from the elevated position that it occupies in conventional cinematic representation. If for Bakhtin uncrowning epitomizes the spirit of carnival, the first authority to be dethroned in carnivalesque literature and cinema is that of the enunciator. The enunciator is overthrown together with the entire order that is anchored in its authority. Its uncrowning precipitates the destruction of social practices and institutions and of social time and space.⁷² In the carnivalesque mode, the function of confirming the

Burgoyne, *supra* note 67, at 7.

⁶⁹ *Id.* at 12.

⁷⁰ See SEYMOUR CHATMAN, COMING TO TERMS: THE RHETORIC OF NARRATIVE IN FICTION AND FILM 130-37, 226 (1990).

⁷¹ See METZ, *supra* note 45, at 194. While borrowing Metz’s term “impersonal enunciation,” I do not endorse his theory of cinematic enunciation.

⁷² In mannerist painting, Friedlaender observed, the destruction of space is a corollary of the “lack of a unified viewpoint.” FRIEDLAENDER, *supra* note 27, at 17. In other words, the

2010] CARNIVAL AND APOCALYPSE IN FELLINI 1035

credibility of voices and points of view becomes redundant: Once interiority fades away no issues of credibility arise. The external point of view of the enunciator and the inner, private points of view of the characters vanish hand in hand. The thrill of carnival consists in this simultaneous elimination of internalized and transcendent authorities and points of view.

The breakdown of the external point of view implies that the enunciator can no longer be distinguished by its superior epistemic access and by its power to disqualify points of view of characters. Everybody—characters, spectators, and the enunciator—enjoy optical omnipotence in the open-ended and indefinable space of carnival. The collapse of the transcendent point of view also entails that there is no superior intellectual or ethical perception of things that has the last word on the significance of characters and events. The carnivalesque mode denies the enunciator the privilege of insinuation and implicit commentary, which Booth accorded to the implied author. The ultimate significance of all images and episodes emerges within the “carnival sense of the world” that is shared by the enunciator, characters, and spectators as participants in carnival.

The enunciator remains the governing consciousness of the film in the sense that it puts together the spectacle and manipulates the sequence of the images for the entertainment and illumination of the spectators. The dethroned enunciator can be compared to an impresario of a variety show who groups and orders the different numbers. The spectators relate to the enunciator as the initiator and administrator of a spectacle who draws everybody into the atmosphere of carnival. Yet the enunciator does not occupy an elevated position in relation to the spectacle, the spectators, and the characters. A gathering of two-dimensional, archetypal characters, like a *commedia dell'arte* performance and Fellini's films, is free from authorial despotism. Fellini could have been despotic in relation to his actors, but the characters in his movies are free from authorial jurisdiction. The iconic, two-dimensional nature of *commedia dell'arte* characters bestows upon them an aura of timelessness. It undermines authorial claims in relation to them in the same way that parodic discourse in a novel splinters the unified authorial position. Needless to say, it is not Fellini's total control over the smallest detail that is called into doubt by the independence of characters, but rather the fictive jurisdiction of the cinematic enunciator.

Bakhtin has famously argued that Dostoevsky designed his heroes in a way that made them unfinalizable by himself as author. Bakhtin traced the polyphony of Dostoevsky's novels to the spirit of carnival.

Dostoevsky's heroes are very different from Fellini's. According to Bakhtin, it is the unfathomable and inexhaustible profundity of the self-consciousness of Dostoevsky's heroes that liberates them from the author's jurisdiction. In the case of Fellini's, it is rather the outwardness of characters that releases them from authorial control. Still, some of Bakhtin's comments on the independence of Dostoevsky's heroes remain applicable to Fellini's characters.⁷³

In the polyphonic novel, Bakhtin writes, "[t]he author retains for himself, that is, for his exclusive field of vision, not a single essential definition, not a single trait, not the smallest feature of the hero."⁷⁴ Such a waiver of epistemic advantage certainly describes the position of the enunciator in Fellini's films. Since characters are fully externalized and exist fully in the present, the enunciator enjoys no privileged perspective on them. A note by Bakhtin that complements this observation concerns the elusiveness and ungraspability of the characters' being:

In Dostoevsky's artistic thinking, the genuine life of the personality takes place at the point of non-coincidence between a man and himself, at his point of departure beyond the limits of all that he is as a material being, a being that can be spied on, defined, predicted apart from its own will, "at second hand."⁷⁵

Bakhtin's allusion to the non-material dimension of Dostoevsky's characters may not apply to Fellini's. However, Fellini's characters too exist outside themselves, in a state of ontological displacement and ambiguity that denies the enunciator the capacity to assign them a specific role within a predetermined sequence of events. The characters are capable neither of having motivations nor of performing actions that can be interwoven by the enunciator into an overall scheme. Their existence is exhausted by the outward projection of a mask to be observed by others and by themselves, and as such it is always evasive, ephemeral, and ungraspable.

In the course of his career Fellini attained mastery of the means for forging intimacy between the enunciator and the spectators. Once the spectators are relieved of the burden of constructing a separate fictional world that is ruled from a divine authorial position, the enunciator becomes present among them. The enunciator in Fellini's cinema constantly signals its presence to the spectators by subtle and ambiguous reminders of artificiality. In the perpetual now of carnival the enunciator attends the spectacle together with the spectators. No longer presiding over a fictional world, the enunciator assumes ordinary

⁷³ In his chapter on Bakhtinian dialogism in film, Stam does not discuss the issue of the relations between author and hero. See *SUBVERSIVE PLEASURES*, *supra* note 1.

⁷⁴ *PROBLEMS*, *supra* note 6, at 48.

⁷⁵ *Id.* at 59.

2010] CARNIVAL AND APOCALYPSE IN FELLINI 1037

human proportions even if it remains invisible. It addresses each spectator individually with an invitation to contemplate the characters and the spectacle. Moreover, since the characters are partly free from authorial design, the enunciator discovers them in the course of each screening for the first time, an experience shared with the spectators. Fellini sometimes makes the movement of the camera coincide with that of a person who presumably stands just outside the frame and follows the characters without prior knowledge of their intended direction and destination. When there is no character in the film to whom the camera's searching gaze can be attributed, the camera's inquisitiveness betrays the presence of the dethroned enunciator. The prospects of the enunciator being caught in the frame—a beatific vision of sorts—are at once thrilling and disconcerting. In the finale of *And the Ship Sails On*,⁷⁶ the camera turns around itself to reveal not Federico Fellini in full view but the lens of another movie camera, with the man who operates it—perhaps Fellini—half hidden behind it.

It is tempting to identify the enunciator with Fellini. The carnivalesque mode seems to exclude the possibility of discrepancy between the attitudes of the human author and those of the enunciator, the manipulator of the images. The universality of the “carnival sense of the world” seems to reach outside the film and capture the actual auteur in its hold. However, the enunciator is an imaginary instance that is reconstructed by the spectators on the basis of the film's images. The enunciator cannot coincide with a visible person, even if in the carnivalesque mode it may be confused with and personified by real persons more easily than in other modes of expression. In *Intervista*,⁷⁷ Fellini's multiple incarnations and repeated apparitions proclaim the presence of the enunciator with accumulating intensity, but without fully actualizing that presence. If the pre-representational and atemporal experience of carnival reenacts an early state akin to Winnicott's potential space, the enunciator can be likened to the figure of the mother in the potential space. Like the mother's figure in the potential space, the Fellinian enunciator licenses the ontological ambiguity involved in masquerade. Like the mother's figure, it engages the spectators in a serious play, in which it takes part, and which gives birth to the subject of the law through an interlude of grace and excess.

⁷⁶ AND THE SHIP SAILS ON, *supra* note 21.

⁷⁷ INTERVISTA, *supra* note 22.

IV. RADICALIZATIONS OF CARNIVAL: THE APOCALYPTIC AND METALEPTIC MODES

As a reenactment of an initiatory experience, of the absolute sincerity of masquerade and play, carnival is bound to reach a point of exhaustion. While carnival always involves a contemplative dimension, the festive and sensuous spirit of carnival sometimes dies out. I will refer to the means by which Fellini's cinema reenacts inherent crises of carnival as the apocalyptic and metaleptic modes.

A. *The Apocalyptic Mode*

Since transcendent and internalized authorities vouch for the transformation of nature into a habitable space and for the subordination of body to culture, their overthrow in carnival leads to a perception of nature as alien, undomesticated, and persecutory. The human order seems, in accordance with pre-modern conceptions of carnival, to face extinction as malevolent powers invade it.⁷⁸ The apocalyptic images in Fellini's cinema center on the borderline between civilization and wilderness or bring out the alien and the uncanny in familiar objects and places. Since apocalypse is an inevitable moment of carnival, the apocalyptic mode is ubiquitous in Fellini's films. It testifies for Fellini's debt to Italian neo-realism. In an almost Marxist vein, the apocalyptic mode marginalizes human intention and action in relation to their ecological settings.

One group of apocalyptic images is that of familiar artifices studied by the camera with meticulous scientific detachment that makes

⁷⁸ The apocalyptic mode can be understood, in the light of various psychoanalytic theories, as a result of a real or imaginary withdrawal of maternal love. It can be described as an advent of the uncanny precipitated by the collapse of representation. It can be viewed as a result of the shattering of fantasies of omnipotence, which according to Winnicott are involved in play in the potential space and condition the eventual capacity to embrace reality and representation. Followers of Klein would interpret the apocalyptic mode as an expression of a "depressive anxiety" raised by the suspicion that the internalized maternal "object," which anchors and invigorates individual autonomy throughout life, has been damaged and can no longer sustain the subject's embrace of reality and representation. The specters of threatening objects and undomesticated nature would be interpreted as expressions of the decay, if not hostility, of the internalized maternal instance. Some of the signals of artificiality that intimate the reassuring presence of the enunciator disclose, at the same time, the presence of an alien and intractable power that threatens to wreck havoc upon the human order. While the figure of the enunciator does not quite come to coincide with that persecutory presence, the enunciator may still exhibit a certain oscillation between reassurance and persecution. Such an interpretation of apocalypse can be integrated into an account of carnival alongside Winnicott's theory of the potential space despite the pronounced rivalry between Klein's and Winnicott's theories of culture.

2010] CARNIVAL AND APOCALYPSE IN FELLINI 1039

the objects appear unfamiliar and unclassifiable. The artifices thus inspected assume a life of their own, an existence independent of the use humans make of them and for which they were invented. Objects like the rotating beacon in *Ginger and Fred*,⁷⁹ the frantic, unstoppable combine harvester in *La voce della luna*⁸⁰ or the crane in *Intervista*⁸¹ gradually resemble otherworldly menacing creatures that invade the human space. They occupy a *liminal* position between order and catastrophe.⁸² Strange animals such as the monstrous fish emitted by the sea onto Lichas's ship in *Satyricon*,⁸³ and onto the seashore in the finale of *La dolce vita*,⁸⁴ are less ambiguous intimations of apocalypse.

A second category of apocalyptic, *liminal* images is that of peripheral zones between human settlement and wilderness. Many scenes in *I vitelloni*,⁸⁵ *Satyricon*,⁸⁶ *Amarcord*,⁸⁷ as well as other films, are situated on the margins of towns, where signs of civilization seem to be misplaced and civic infrastructure fades away into nothingness. *La strada*,⁸⁸ *Nights of Cabiria*,⁸⁹ *Il bidone*,⁹⁰ *Juliet of the Spirits*,⁹¹ *City of Women*,⁹² and *La voce della luna*⁹³ take place almost entirely in such *liminal* landscapes. The meditative scenes on the sea shore that can be found in almost each of Fellini's films (for example, *I vitelloni*,⁹⁴ *La strada*,⁹⁵ *La dolce vita*,⁹⁶ *Juliet of the Spirits*⁹⁷) and the long highway shot in *Fellini's Roma*⁹⁸ also contemplate the margins of domesticated human space.

Another group of recurring apocalyptic images depicts the dispersion of human gatherings. Fellini dedicates extended shots to the

⁷⁹ GINGER AND FRED (Anthea Film et al. 1986).

⁸⁰ LA VOCE DELLA LUNA (Cecchi Gori Group et al. 1989).

⁸¹ INTERVISTA, *supra* note 22.

⁸² Bondanella's description of the crane in *Intervista* as a "prehistoric monster" applies to similar artifices in other Fellini films: "Fellini and his crew assemble in the interior of Cinecittà to photograph the famous Teatro 5 from a high crane shot as if seen in a dream from above There is a moment of total silence as the enormous crane takes on the characteristics of a prehistoric monster, photographed against the background of the lunar light and the strange, misty smoke." BONDANELLA, *supra* note 31, at 207-08.

⁸³ SATYRICON, *supra* note 8.

⁸⁴ LA DOLCE VITA, *supra* note 24.

⁸⁵ I VITELLONI (API Productions et al. 1953).

⁸⁶ SATYRICON, *supra* note 8.

⁸⁷ AMARCORD, *supra* note 36.

⁸⁸ LA STRADA, *supra* note 32.

⁸⁹ NIGHTS OF CABIRIA (Dino De Laurentiis Co. & Les Films Marceau 1957).

⁹⁰ IL BIDONE (Societe Generale de Cinematographiqu & Titanus Produzioni 1955).

⁹¹ JULIET OF THE SPIRITS, *supra* note 50.

⁹² CITY OF WOMEN, *supra* note 56.

⁹³ LA VOCE DELLA LUNA, *supra* note 80.

⁹⁴ I VITELLONI, *supra* note 85.

⁹⁵ LA STRADA, *supra* note 32.

⁹⁶ LA DOLCE VITA, *supra* note 24.

⁹⁷ JULIET OF THE SPIRITS, *supra* note 50.

⁹⁸ FELLINI'S ROMA, *supra* note 11.

scattering of various types of assembly: party, performance, ritual, or any other type of gathering. The camera often scrutinizes places of assembly after the crowd abandons them. One of Fellini's favorite images is that of the town square at night, forsaken, covered with scattered remains of festivities.⁹⁹ When an assembly is disbanded the wind takes over, swirling around leaves and debris. In Fellini's films the wind always blows fiercely and tirelessly in the background, leaving no safe haven from apocalypse. In modern society, the ultimate factory of meaning is not the town square but television and cinema studios. *Intervista*¹⁰⁰ opens and ends with chillingly straightforward shots of empty studios in Cinecittà at dawn. Routine studio functions are idly performed here and there amid scraps of wrecked sets. The spectacle recalls the pulling down of the surreal, gigantic outdoor set in *Eight and a Half*,¹⁰¹ just before the grand finale.

One of the most elaborate scenes of dispersion in Fellini's films occurs in *Fellini's Casanova*.¹⁰² At the end of an opera performance in Dresden, Casanova remains in the theatre hall, observing the theatre attendants putting out the chandeliers. A whisper—"Gia-cco-mo"—suddenly crosses the empty hall. Searching for the origin of the voice Casanova finds his old mother seated in one of the theatre cabins. Casanova has not seen her for years. His proposals to spend time with her are met with derisive rejection, probably not for the first time. This is the single point in his films where Fellini explicitly places the apocalyptic in the setting of an actual or imaginary encounter with the mother.

B. *The Metaleptic Mode*

Fellini's apocalyptic objects and environments, like his characters, do not form part of a world, fictional or real. They contribute nothing to the causal explanation of action. They dissolve representation, and the intensity of their presence is sometimes unbearable. Apocalypse can be perceived neither from a God's-eye point of view nor from personal points of view that are locked within a fictional world. The experience of apocalypse is immediately shared by the enunciator, characters, and spectators as participants in the worldless realm of carnival. *Amarcord*¹⁰³ ends with the long-awaited marriage of Gradisca, the

⁹⁹ On the image of the piazza at night and generally on the "recurring presence of the bizarre" in Fellini, see Peter Harcourt, *The Secret Life of Federico Fellini*, in FEDERICO FELLINI: ESSAYS IN CRITICISM, *supra* note 3, at 239, 248-49.

¹⁰⁰ INTERVISTA, *supra* note 22.

¹⁰¹ EIGHT AND A HALF, *supra* note 49.

¹⁰² FELLINI'S CASANOVA, *supra* note 12.

¹⁰³ AMARCORD, *supra* note 36.

2010] CARNIVAL AND APOCALYPSE IN FELLINI 1041

town's beauty of Fellini's reinvented Rimini. The setting of the finale is carnivalesque, an outdoor wedding banquet. As twilight is about to descend, Biscuin, a street vendor and the town's inveterate fabricator of stories, addresses the camera and asks the spectators to go home. The apocalyptic mode takes over as the guests start to leave. The marriage takes place in a *liminal* landscape, a field out of town. The time of the year is also *liminal*, last days of winter with erratic showers and the obligatory wind. The guests depart, each in a different direction, in a random and disorderly manner that dramatizes the irreproducibility of the moment. They will never reassemble because Gradisca leaves the town to join her new husband, and because reunions are anyway impossible. The town's boys and girls fool around, running aimlessly amid leftovers of the banquet. Stupefied by the apocalyptic, their laughter is alarming, an effusion of carnivalesque negativity.

Genette introduced the term *metalepsis* to denote transgression of boundaries between a narrated world and the world in which the narration takes place. Such transgressions, Genette noted, produce a comic or fantastic effect.¹⁰⁴ In an essay on *Don Quixote*, Borges famously observed that the transgression of boundaries between narrative levels that occurs in the novel kindles the readers' ontological anxiety, the suspicion that their own existence might be fictitious.¹⁰⁵ Fellini makes use of several types of *metalepsis* in numerous scenes. I focus presently on episodes in which characters who have shown no awareness of the camera suddenly address the spectators. Biscuin's address to the spectators and his gaze at the camera seem to be clear instances of *metalepsis*. In Fellini's short movie *The Temptation of Dr. Antonio*¹⁰⁶ the moralizing protagonist rushes to the camera to obstruct the spectators' view of an impious poster. Gazes at the camera occur in several of Fellini's films since *Nights of Cabiria*.¹⁰⁷ Bazin noted that Giulietta Masina's gaze at the final shot of *Nights of Cabiria*¹⁰⁸ is ambiguous; as in the case of several other gazes at the camera in

¹⁰⁴ See GÉRARD GENETTE, NARRATIVE DISCOURSE: AN ESSAY IN METHOD 234 (Jane E. Lewin trans., 1980). On *metalepsis* in cinema, see GÉRARD GENETTE, MÉTALEPSE (2004). The term "metaleptic mode" occurs in Monika Fludernik, *Scene Shift, Metalepsis, and the Metaleptic Mode*, 37 STYLE 382 (2003).

¹⁰⁵ Borges writes:

Why does it disturb us that the map be included in the map and the thousand and one nights in the book of the *Thousand and One Nights*? Why does it disturb us that Don Quixote be a reader of the *Quixote* and Hamlet a spectator of *Hamlet*? I believe I have found the reason: these inversions suggest that if the fictional characters of a fictional work can be readers or spectators, we, its readers or spectators, can be fictitious. In 1833, Carlyle observed that the history of the universe is an infinite sacred book that all men write and read and try to understand, and in which they are also written.

Jorge Luis Borges, *Partial Magic in the Quixote*, in LABYRINTHS 196 (1964).

¹⁰⁶ THE TEMPTATION OF DR. ANTONIO (Cineriz et al. 1962).

¹⁰⁷ NIGHTS OF CABIRIA, *supra* note 89.

¹⁰⁸ *Id.*

Fellini's films, it is uncertain that Cabiria intends her gaze to reach the spectators.

The concept of metalepsis has to be altered or loosened in order to be applicable to Fellini's films. If the carnivalesque mode collapses real and fictional worlds into a single sphere, there are no boundaries to be transgressed. Hence, instances of metalepsis, or rather quasi-metalepsis, in the carnivalesque mode do not stir the same ontological anxiety that they produce elsewhere. The quasi-metaleptic devices in Fellini's films push the carnivalesque conflation of the real and the fictional to its extreme, but they do not break the rules. In the carnivalesque mode, the rules have already been broken. However, by radicalizing carnival, the more unsettling metaleptic devices bring carnival to a point of exhaustion. They detach the spectators from the spectacle and force them to look at carnival and at their own participation in it from outside of it.

In conventional representation, too, metaleptic devices disrupt the spectators' immersion in spectacle. While in conventional representation metaleptic devices disrupt the spectators' immersion by transgressing boundaries between worlds, in carnival the same devices re-establish boundaries between the real and the fictional. They address the spectators in their ordinary social capacities. They raise doubts about the point of carnival, introducing into carnival self-critical reflexivity. Their effect is sobering rather than fantastic. In *Amarcord*,¹⁰⁹ one of Titta's friends gazes at the camera on his way to confession, calling the spectators' attention to their own condemnable participation in carnival and indulgence in fantasy. Like the mother in the potential space, the enunciator shows us the way from play and masquerade back to the world of everyday life. Biscein addresses the spectators in order to urge them to go home. In *City of Women*,¹¹⁰ an exasperated Marcello Mastroianni exclaims in the middle of the film: "What kind of film is this?"

V. ART'S POTENTIAL SPACE

Fellini's cinema conveys a latent recognition that the carnivalesque vision of humanity is incomplete. At the same time it demonstrates that carnival is not only one indispensable side of life, but is that side which attaches humans to the world they inhabit by preceding and exceeding the contours of that world. Winnicott's concept of the potential space articulates the basic features of Fellini's intuitive notion of carnival.

¹⁰⁹ AMARCORD, *supra* note 36.

¹¹⁰ CITY OF WOMEN, *supra* note 56.

2010] CARNIVAL AND APOCALYPSE IN FELLINI 1043

The potential space and its carnivalesque reenactments bind humans to reality and representation by collapsing the distinctions between inner and outer worlds and between the real and the fictional. Like play in the potential space, the thrill of the vanishing of interiority in carnival is made possible by the presence of an authority that licenses excess and masquerade. In Fellini's films, the enunciator steps down from its transcendent position to provide the maternal confirmation described by Winnicott.

The central theme of Fellini's cinema is the advent of the apocalyptic in carnival. The uniqueness of Fellini's cinema lies in its capacity to reenact, rather than merely represent, the initiatory spaces of play described by Winnicott and Bakhtin and the accompanying specters of apocalypse. Carnival and apocalypse are brought to life through the collapse of the transcendent point of view that objectifies and domesticates reality, and classifies objective reality as either real or fictional. As an enactment of carnival disorder, the carnivalesque mode eventually reinstates law and representation. However, in Fellini's cinema the transformative and regenerative power of carnival is not fully harnessed to the restoration of order and to the reinstallation of internalized and transcendent authorities. Fellini's cinema insists on preserving a permanent space for carnival.

The theory of ritual as a process of destruction and refoundation of order and representation is applicable to the carnivalesque tradition more readily than to other artistic traditions because the carnivalesque mode favors ritual, non-representational means of expression. When the screening of a Fellini film is over, the enunciator sheds its convivial informality and reoccupies a transcendent, objectifying, lawgiving position. Carnival comes then to be *represented* by transcendent and internalized authorities that ground themselves in it at the moment of their foundation. The reassuring and apocalyptic presences occasioned by each of Fellini's films are compounded, projected, and transformed into the transcendent figure of an enunciator-sovereign, and into its internalized instances.¹¹¹ The "carnival sense of the world" and, in particular, the sense of apocalypse are suppressed under the reinstated regime of representation.

Fellini's cinema advocates another response to apocalypse, alongside reinstitution of law and representation, which consists in perseverance with masquerade without suppressing awareness of evanescence and futility. Fellini's films present themselves as an

¹¹¹ According to Kleinian theory, in the contemplation of a work of art instances of negativity—such as the apocalyptic images in Fellini's films—are integrated into the artwork as an abstract totality which stands for the "good object." See Hanna Segal, *A Psychoanalytic Approach to Aesthetics*, in *READING MELANIE KLEIN 203* (Lyndsey Stonebridge & John Phillips eds., 1998).

exercise in such a response to apocalypse: Filmmaking itself as an instance of an ongoing carnival becomes a means of confrontation with apocalypse. Fellini states this view of filmmaking explicitly in the finales of *Eight and a Half*¹¹² and *Intervista*.¹¹³ Apocalyptic images may have the final word within some of the films, but filmmaking always ensures that carnival survives and integrates apocalypse. While this view of filmmaking may appear Nietzschean because it repudiates reifying fictions, such as law, order, and transcendent authority, Fellini's reaction to apocalypse has little to do with Dionysian self-forgetfulness. Rather, it consists in the prolongation of an initiatory play that allows humans to inhabit apocalypse by means of cultivation of idiosyncrasies and mannerisms. It is a perpetuation of the confrontation with apocalypse and with the caress of the enunciator, two founding encounters that are continually reenacted after the institution of representation in a lingering, permanent sphere of carnival presence.

While the perpetuation of masquerade presumes the social conditions produced by the law, it demarcates a realm of freedom from transcendent and internalized authorities. Fellini's films present carnival as the quintessential manifestation of human freedom. They put together a spectacular manifesto for freedom that should be recognized, against all odds, as embedded in the liberal tradition. It is a liberal manifesto because it draws an image of the subject as engaged in perpetual self-fashioning, without an inner essence for it to realize, and without ever attaining self-identity. The community, according to such a view, may provide the subject with a repository of masks, but it cannot transform the subject into an organ of a social order. The subject, if not entirely idiosyncratic, can become at most a random specter, a flickering reflection of communal life. A carnivalesque view of human freedom will find itself at variance with familiar liberal views insofar as it regards freedom as coterminous with the excesses, uncrownings, and deceits of masquerade. Yet it is supported by various historical and socio-theoretical considerations that point to carnival as the historical origin of modern freedoms.¹¹⁴ It invites us to accord carnival and social practices of production and contemplation of art a prominent place among the historical premises of liberalism.

¹¹² EIGHT AND A HALF, *supra* note 49.

¹¹³ INTERVISTA, *supra* note 22.

¹¹⁴ On modern freedoms as expansions of the freedom of carnival, see Lior Barshack, *The Sovereignty of Pleasure: Sexual and Political Freedom in the Operas of Mozart and Da Ponte*, 20 L. & LITERATURE 47 (2008).