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Forum Italicum

Volume 33, No. 1 Spring 1999

FELLINI, ADVERTISING AND THE INEFFABLE OBJECTS OF DESIRE¹

Questa contiguità, questa lunghissima, interminabile sequenza in cui si è svolta e continua a svolgersi la mia esistenza, mi impedisce di pensare con nostalgia a un passato, che mi sembra del resto tutto inventato, o a un futuro...²

We are such stuff as dreams are made on; and our little life is rounded with a sleep.

William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*³

Of the stuff of dreams is the world that Federico Fellini has given us during the unending sequence which was and still is his life, as we incessantly relive it in the magic darkness of a movie theatre. It is thus with infinite emotion that one discusses Fellini and the wonderful and magic world he created for all of us. Indeed it is ever so emotional to travel again in my memory, and experience the kind of journey he loved so much — a journey which was nothing but a long and uninterrupted itinerary in the world of possibility, in the mysterious and ineffable universe of the Imaginary following the enveloping and alluring coordinates of dream, seduction and desire. It is perhaps by pursuing these coordinates that one shall better understand the mysterious, at times disquieting and yet always seductive presence of the advertising image in the long and uninterrupted film Fellini fabricated during an entire life.

The relationship was not unilateral, as countless are the cases of true "cannibalism" exercised by audiovisual and paper advertising on the large and sensuous Fellinian filmic body made of images and sounds, light and movement. That body has been repeatedly appropriated and repropounded as an icon or a myth of Western culture; then it has been progressively emptied and incessantly replicated as an unrestrained and exciting *simulacrum* of itself and of that very culture. And thus, on screens and telescreens, on billboards and tabloids, the phantasmatic forms of Anita and Marcello in the Trevi Fountain of *La dolce vita* (*La Dolce Vita*, 1959), or the beaches enveloped in cerulean lights and magic atmosphere materialize and disappear in an incessant motion, in an eternal transit. These images offer us

fragments of *I vitelloni* (*I Vitelloni*, 1953), *Amarcord* (*Amarcord*, 1974), and maybe even of *Fellini Satyricon* (*Fellini's Satyricon*, 1969) and *Il Casanova* (*Fellini's Casanova*, 1976), frozen in an eternal present time, and thus become the "traces" of that which was, for many of us and for a long time, the "world." In an unstoppable process of simulation, the Fellinian filmic body annuls itself in the obliteration of the border between the Real and the Imaginary: as Jean Baudrillard once stated, in our time the principle of simulation wins over both the reality principle and the pleasure principle.⁴ This is the apocalyptic and, even though shadowy, yet not iconoclastic atmosphere that dominates the last filmic vision generated by and in Federico Fellini, *La voce della luna* (*The Voice of the Moon*, 1990), the poem of those great simulators who are the lunatics, the fools.⁵ And yet at the end of this last film, it is Fellini himself who seems to be proposing a way out of the labyrinth: through Ivo Salvini's/Roberto Benigni's request for silence as the only possibility to acquire meaning, Fellini is undoubtedly calling for the sensoriality of experience. It is thus by activating an "aesthetic" and not aesthetic circuit⁶ that one could once again circulate the Fellinian body, an indefatigable producer of oneiric phantasmagoria and seductive objects of desire which are perpetually fluctuating in the universe of possibility.

In this respect, the words with which Italo Calvino concluded his *Autobiografia di uno spettatore*, the introduction to the Einaudi 1974 volume collecting the screenplays of four early films by Fellini, seem prophetic, as he states that

Il cinema della distanza che aveva nutrito la nostra giovinezza è capovolto definitivamente nel cinema della vicinanza assoluta. Nei tempi stretti delle nostre vite tutto resta lì, angosciosamente presente; le prime immagini dell'eros e le premonizioni della morte ci raggiungono in ogni sogno; la fine del mondo è cominciata con noi e non accenna a finire; il film di cui ci illudevamo di essere solo spettatori è la storia della nostra vita.⁷

[The cinema of distance which had nourished our youth is definitively overturned into the cinema of absolute proximity. In the tight schedules of our lives everything remains there, as an anguishing presence; the first images of Eros and the premonitions of death reach us in every dream; the end of the world began with us and does not show any sign

of ending: we were under the illusion of being merely spectators of a film which is instead the story of our lives.]

That distance would give an answer to, and then reflect the urgency for a "dilatazione dei confini del reale" ["broadening of the boundaries of reality"], the need for incommensurable territories which would be almost "entità geometriche, ma anche concrete, assolutamente piene di facce e situazioni e ambienti, che col mondo dell'esperienza diretta stabilivano una loro rete (astratta) di rapporti"⁸ ["geometric entities, but also concrete ones, absolutely filled with faces and situations and milieus, and which would establish a(n) abstract network of relationships with the world of direct experience"]. That distance is irreparably lost even in the funereal and apocalyptic vision of Fellini's last film. Yet in the end the chance for a new expressive but also cognitive function of cinema is here prefigured in the opening of a communicative channel between the explorative-documentaristic and the introspective-imaginary,⁹ between light and darkness, between the real and the unreal. In *La voce della luna* "la narrazione procede su due piani, in una moltiplicazione vertiginosa di de-realizzazione: da una parte, la realtà-irrealtà di quanto accade; dall'altra parte, la rappresentazione televisiva"¹⁰ ["the narrative proceeds on two levels, in a bewildering multiplication of 'de-realization': on the one hand, the reality-unreality of happenings; on the other, their televised representation"] which, I may add, "de-realizes" this "reality-unreality." Thus, Fellini seems to be unquestionably suggesting a way out. In order for us to overcome the condition of "de-reality" which on the one hand crystallizes and petrifies everything making it *irreplaceable*, and on the other places the Imaginary in a position of proscription, one must retrieve the ability *to say* this death: one must thus retrieve the possibility of enunciation.¹¹ It is in the overcoming of the condition of "de-reality," it is in the eclipsing of this paralyzing condition which characterizes the "threshold," the eternal *trespassing*, the hallucinating and hallucinated state of "de-reality" that one may recover meaning.¹² This is the true significance of Ivo's sudden exclamation during his conversation with the Dottorino in *La voce della luna*,

...Il fatto è che io non ce la faccio più a restare in questa sospensione, sempre in attesa, come su una soglia. Ed è un'attesa che non ha mai

fine. Devo sapere, dovete riuscire a farmi capire. ...Non è solo per me, anche per lei, per voi, per tutti.¹³

[...The fact is that I can no longer remain in this suspension, always waiting, as if on a threshold. And it is a waiting that has no end. I must know, you must make me understand. ...It not simply for me, but also for you Sir, for you Sirs and Madams, for everybody.]

The journey leading to the apocalyptic and yet prophetic vision of *La voce della luna* lasted over fifty years. During this journey, the relationship between Fellini, his cinema and advertising remained long caught up in the disparate outcomes of the judgment that over the years the director expressed on the standardized use of television and audiovisual advertising. On the one hand, the reasons and the stages of Fellini's critique of a specific use of advertising, and in particular the one practiced by commercial television networks since the second half of the seventies, are well-known.¹⁴ On the other hand, just as well-known is the itinerary of Fellini's meditation on the difference between cinema and television as means of expression, a meditation which indeed began with *Block-notes di un regista (Fellini: A Director's Notebook)* in 1969,¹⁵ an extremely significant year for our discussion as it was also a watershed in the long and intricate "love discourse" Fellini entertained with advertising. The feelings of attraction and repulsion he experienced towards television are therefore familiar: on the one hand, he was attracted to the potential for synthesis and immediacy inherent in TV story-telling, and to the possibility of a higher degree of intimacy with the TV spectator. On the other, he became increasingly aware of the power of fragmentation of the *récit* as a result of "zapping" as well as of the constant and obtrusive commercial interruptions. Furthermore, he grew conscious of the progressive "lowering" of the relationship between spectacle and spectator, deprived as it is of any kind of magic and seduction in the asphyctic familiarity of the domesticated environment of a mass mediatic house. In the long monologue Fellini left for us in the volume edited by Charlotte Chandler, the director synthesized with eloquence what is, I believe, his conclusive position on the medium of television while commenting on his decision to shoot *Prova d'orchestra (Orchestra Rehearsal, 1979)*:

For me, however, the decision to work on the small screen went beyond a question of morals, technical limitations, or aesthetics. I had done television twice before, *A Director's Notebook* and *The Clowns*, but each time it meant walking into a fog of blurred, confused images. I felt ambivalent about contributing again to the jumble of images with which TV fills our minds every second of the day and night. Insidiously, it seduces us, obliterating every vestige of discernment, substituting an alternative, synthetic world to which we must adjust. Worse yet, we *want* to adjust to it. I see TV and its viewer as two mirrors facing each other, reflecting between themselves an infinite void, endlessly monotonous. The question we must keep asking ourselves is, Do we believe what we see or do we see what we believe?¹⁶

As Peter Bondanella pointedly observed, what Fellini ultimately disdained in television is "its reduction of everything it presents to the same mass level of insignificance."¹⁷ While he was never really opposed to advertising per se, Fellini was certainly against the abnormal use commercial television made and makes of it. In particular, he challenged the aberrant way by which commercials provoke constant and uncontrolled interruptions in the narrative rhythm of a filmic tale once it becomes part of television programming.¹⁸

An attentive and curious witness of the advent of television as well as of all major cultural transformations his country experienced in the aftermath of World War II, over the years Fellini thus addressed the issue of television as a means of expression as well as of mass communication. Furthermore he observed the transformation television underwent following the introduction of commercial networks; he then addressed and evaluated the use of commercials within television programming and communication. One must however keep these two issues separated from what was an otherwise more prolific and seductive relationship, that is the one he entertained with the advertising image from his early experiences as sketcher and caricaturist to his later work as screenwriter and director. In the introductory pages of his eloquent monographic study, Bondanella already indicated this as a fertile field of research if one wishes to understand fully the intimate reasons of that particular filmic discourse which was only and exclusively Fellini's. Once again Italo Calvino comes to mind when in his *Autobiografia di uno spettatore* he rightly made us aware of the fact that

La forza dell'immagine nei film di Fellini, così difficile da definire perché non si inquadra nei codici di nessuna cultura figurativa, ha le sue radici nell'aggressività ridondante e disarmonica della grafica giornalistica. Quella aggressività capace di imporre in tutto il mondo cartoons e stripes che quanto più appaiono marcati da una stilizzazione individuale tanto più risultano comunicativi a livello di massa.¹⁹

In Fellini's films, the power of the image, so hard to define because it does not fit the codes of any figurative culture, has its roots in the redundant and disharmonic aggressivity of journalistic graphics. That aggressivity capable of imposing all over the world cartoons and strips which have all the greater mass appeal the more individually stylized they appear.

In spite of their unquestionable enunciative violence, the inexhaustible reservoir of disphoric images²⁰ present in satire, comic-strips and some advertising which were prevalent in the years of his youth, offered Fellini an alluring route towards the construction of an increasingly seductive filmic image charged with expressive power and communicative energy. This sheds a new light on his pre-cinematographic beginnings as they are testified, for instance, by the collection of roughly forty articles published in the *Marc Aurelio* in 1939 with the title *Il raccontino pubblicitario* (The Advertising Short Tale). In those articles Fellini offered an exhilarating parody of popular paper and radio advertising of the time.²¹ The history of Fellini's long and ineffable relationship with the advertising image can be defined as an unexhausted and indefatigable itinerary of appropriation and seduction which produced diversified outcomes in the course of the director's magic journey in the Imaginary. One can truly speak of a fatal attraction, a true temptation toward the advertising image, a temptation which was at first merely internal to the narrative, and then became woven into the fabric of the Fellinian filmic image itself.

In the first stage of Fellini's filmography, advertising is mostly exemplified by comic-strip images and paper representations of the heroes of an already mythical cinematic world; such advertising seems to be capable of offering Fellini new and unforeseen possibilities in the creation of characters. At the level of *récit*, the advertising image contributes to a widening of the narrative space in a metaphoric direction. One only needs to recall here the famous juxtaposition of the image of Gelsomina onto the poster of the religious procession in honor of the Virgin Mary in *La strada* (*La Stra-*

da, 1954): such a juxtaposition adds a metaphoric surplus to the already complex parable of the text. Within the diegesis, in early Fellini's films, advertising remains mostly confined to wall posters, and participates to the development of the discourse by adding a vertical signification which is simultaneously beneficial and menacing. In this respect, on the one hand one can think of the wall posters placed all around the town square in the nocturnal opening sequence of *I vitelloni* (*I Vitelloni*, 1953), which here have a limitative function on an already circumscribed and claustrophobic space. On the other hand, one ought to remember the large film posters which stand as a backdrop to the return of Fausto and Sandra from their honey-moon in Rome/Africa/America, and refer back to the dream/desire of the journey/escape.

While in early Fellinian filmography the syntax of wall messages remains mostly caged in the prosaic, documentaristic and linear tension of the texts, with the passage of time the intrinsic ambiguity of the poster gradually comes to be emphasized in and by Fellini's cinema as it becomes increasingly aware of the kind of enunciation and communication such a message foresees and generates:

Il manifesto partecipa della complessa magia del muro, che è insieme ostacolo e sostegno, schermo che occulta e riceve, spazio che arresta e che si proietta. ...Diverso dal gesto familiare, quasi domestico, attraverso il quale noi "consumiamo" gli annunci della stampa e della radio, il gesto sotteso al manifesto murale ci riconduce, in forma più enigmatica, all'atto stesso in virtù del quale noi esistiamo e che, irriducibile a un atto che lo preceda, consiste nel tracciare una differenza.²²

[The poster participates in the elaborate magic of the wall, which is both an obstacle and a support, a screen that conceals and receives, a space that obstructs and projects. ...Different from the familiar, almost domestic gesture, through which we "consume" the advertising messages in print and radio, the gesture subtended to the wall poster brings us back, in a more enigmatic form, to the very act because of which we exist, and which, irreducible to an act that precedes it, consists in the tracing of a difference.]

In the long and unending sequence of Fellini's cinematic journey, it is possible to state that, in the perspective fabricated by following the charm-

ing temptation to proceed to an extradiegetic temporalization of the diegetic space, the time of *I vitelloni* and *La strada*, as well as that of all the narrations which precede *La dolce vita*, is still the time of small towns and provinces, the time of a world surrounded by the expanse of the ocean stretching along the horizon as far as the eye can see. The narrative is still governed by documentary, realistic, and linear concerns: thus the primary obsession is still representation. The syntax and the morphology of dream are still bridled by the discourse of reality.

Yet, in his editorial commentary on *La voce della luna* upon its presentation at the Cannes Film Festival, Serge Toubiana stated that,

La civilization commence dès qu'on quitte le village pour entrer dans la ville. ...A ses origines, le cinéma a d'abord été le puissant médium de transition d'un monde plat (la campagne, à perte de vue), vers un univers cahotique, où le regard est obligé d'aller du bas vers le haut: la ville moderne.²³

[Civilization begins where one leaves the country to enter the city. ...In the beginning, cinema was the powerful means of the transition from a flat world (a boundless country) toward a chaotic universe where the gaze was forced to move upward: the modern city.]

If this is true, then it is with 1959 and with *La dolce vita*, perhaps the movie Fellini loved the most as he himself declared quite often,²⁴ that not only does the director free himself from the urgency of a linear discourse but also finally releases all the oneiric and seductive suggestions which increasingly ground and irreparably emanate from advertising images. Undoubtedly, with *La dolce vita* Fellini definitively frees himself definitively of plot and story.

La Dolce Vita, premier film entièrement discontinu où à la ligne narrative succédait une construction par accumulation de blocs hétérogènes formant un tissu de pure contiguïté. A la logique de la ligne droite se substituait celle de la ronde ouverte, le monde du cercle vicieux, de la ligne courbe ininterrompue où la contamination règne, où chacun est lié à chacun sans savoir ni pourquoi, ni comment. *Huit et demi* en sera l'illustration la plus immédiate et la plus éclatante.²⁵

[*La dolce vita*, the first entirely discontinuous film in which the narrative line was substituted by a construction by accumulation of heterogeneous blocks forming a tissue of pure contiguity. The logic of the straight line was substituted by that of the open circle, the world of the vicious circle, of the uninterrupted curve where contamination reigns, where everyone is linked to everyone else without knowing why or how. *8 1/2* will be its most immediate and impressive demonstration.]

The mostly paper advertising, which in the diegesis of earlier filmic texts had an essentially metaphoric function but never deeply affected the documentary-realistic demands of the narrative, becomes now on the one hand, in its wall representations, a "street library," as Mayakovsky defined it, as well as an "iconographic panorama of our time," as Gillo Dorfles described it²⁶; on the other, in the very genesis of the Fellinian filmic image, it becomes an ineffable, internal temptation since such an image will increasingly build itself according to the logic of metonymy which, when combined with antithesis and ellipsis, allows for a higher freedom in the treatment of meaning.²⁷ As Roland Barthes once remarked,

Il fatto è che la metonimia instaura durante il processo semantico una sorta di contagio non-orientato, da cui in definitiva è il prodotto che trae vantaggio. E se la metonimia è importante in pubblicità, lo si deve al fatto che il contagio di cui essa è soltanto la forma specifica, è lo stesso contagio del desiderio ...il potere della metonimia è immenso: essa fornisce al desiderio il mezzo per accedere al senso, e di lì al racconto²⁸.

[The fact is that during the semantic process metonymy establishes a kind of non-oriented contamination, from which the product ultimately benefits. And if metonymy is important in advertising, this is due to the fact that contamination, of which metonymy is only the specific form, is the same contamination of desire...the power of metonymy is immense: it provides desire with a means to find an access to meaning, and from there to narration.]

If it is true that *Otto e mezzo* (8 1/2, 1963) was the film which in the most exemplary and striking fashion declared the urgency of the true disposal of the problem of representation by freeing the narrative from the demands of both plot and story, it is also true that there is another filmic tale which precedes *Otto e mezzo* by only one year, and is almost a neces-

sary transition from *La dolce vita*. Such a film unveils the lucid self-consciousness with which Fellini was then untangling both the reasons of his long fascination with the advertising image and message, and the internal transformations he had to endure thanks to that long and unexhausted love discourse. We are here referring to the Fellinian episode included in *Boccaccio '70* (1962), and entitled *Le tentazioni del Dottor Antonio* (*The Temptations of Dr. Antonio*). This great little film has been analyzed quite often. Leaving aside the diverse assessments of the aesthetic "value" of the film, so to speak, all discussions recognize its centrality in the development of Fellini's filmography as it moved from an initial "objective" and representational to a decisively more subjective and figurative urgency in its progressive appropriation of the discourse of dream, seduction and desire.²⁹ It is indeed by giving form to Dr. Antonio's/Fellini's "temptations" that the discourse of advertising becomes an enticement truly inherent to Fellini's image in an increasingly evident and explicit fashion. *Le tentazioni del Dottor Antonio* is unmistakably the text which literally stages, and attests the passage from a prosaic form of reality to the ineffable form of the oneiric imagination which is so similar to the syntax and the morphology of desire. In this passage Anita is significantly both the object and subject of discourse. Eventually the acquisition of movement leads her to leave the territory of reification, and to invade the space and time of narration, that is History, but here already as both myth and icon in the form cinema had previously given her. In the moment when Anita leaves the poster, and, as a gigantic and phantasmatic image, takes the minuscule Dr. Antonio in her hand, she gives body and form to the desires and fears of a collective male Imaginary. As Bondanella rightly observed, at that time one witnesses one of the many metadiscursive moments of Fellini's cinema.³⁰ Yet, in the not unimportant inversion of the body as big-small/woman-man, one can also detect a humoristic subversion which is the sign of an ironic appropriation of the larger filmic body, the maker of the most powerful mythologies of our times. The sign here becomes then doubly "segnic," and the image of Anita, from being icon and myth of our civilization, becomes a true simulacrum. As Roland Barthes indicated, the appropriation of the advertising message, and its subversive utilization toward an ironic reflection is the only possible way for the artist to give an effective reply to the message of publicity,

nell'appropriarsene, nel falsificarlo, combinando in forma nuova le unità che a prima vista sembrano comporlo naturalmente. Questo plagio, segno di libertà, costituisce un atto di profonda ironia, che attualmente è il solo mezzo a disposizione per poter parlare, a nostra volta, la lingua delle comunicazioni di massa.³¹

[by appropriating and falsifying it, by combining in an unpredictable way the units which seem to compose it naturally at first sight. This plagiarism is a sign of freedom, and represents an act of profound irony which, at this point, is the only means we have to speak effectively the language of mass communication.]

By consciously identifying in Anita/Sylvia of *La dolce vita* the iconography of desire itself, at first Fellini transforms her into a poster-screen of the erotic projections of a repressed male Imaginary. Emptied of its essence at first, and then filled with milk/product/commodity, Anita's body becomes an advertising image. Later, though, coming into contact with the sensoriality of Antonio, the body/phantom is thus emptied of the commodity, and becomes a doubly segnic sign, that is not only a sign that immediately refers to what it denotes but also identifies itself with the product which is called to designate, that is desire itself³²; the phantasmatic body of Anita becomes the true simulacrum of desire.

Unquestionably, *Le tentazioni del Dottor Antonio* is one of the most self-reflexive films of Fellini's cinema, a text in which the director gives a form to his vivid and fertile imagination but also traces with clarity and awareness an expressive journey leading him further away from those realistic-documentary and representational needs which characterized his early cinema. If the journey has to proceed, though, the large Fellinian filmic body would necessarily have to free itself not only from the demands of the *récit* but also from those of History, that is the discourse which increasingly faced him with its characteristics of linearity and monologism: that is, a form of enunciation and signification which is profoundly "hysterical." To fully understand Fellini's position on this point, that is on the timeliness and usefulness of giving the past a form which is no longer that of History, it is beneficial to remember Roland Barthes' remarks when he wrote,

Che cos'è la storia? Non è forse semplicemente quel tempo in cui non eravamo ancora nati?...La Storia è isterica: essa prende forma solo se la si guarda — e per guardarla bisogna esserne esclusi. Come essere vivente io sono esattamente il contrario della Storia, io sono ciò che la smemisce, che la distrugge a tutto vantaggio della mia sola storia (impossibile per me credere ai "testimoni"; impossibile, per lo meno, essere un testimone).³³

[*What is history? Isn't it simply that time in which we weren't born yet? ...History is hysterical: it assumes a form only if one looks at it — and in order to be able to look at it, one needs to be excluded from it. As a living being, I am exactly the contrary of History. I am what belies it, what destroys it in favor of my own story (it is impossible for me to believe in "witnesses"; it is at least impossible for me to be a witness).*]

For an entire decade following *Le tentazioni del Dottor Antonio* — a decade which culminates, between 1969 and 1972, with the "roman trilogy" [*Block-notes di un regista, Roma (Fellini's Roma, 1972)* and *Fellini Satyricon*] and, as a necessary point of transit, with *I clowns (The Clowns, 1970)*, Fellini forever dismisses the demands of representation, testimony and faithfulness: he severs his ties with the time of the city, and significantly enters the time of the metropolis. Since then, the gaze of the *flâneur*, rather than that of the witness, dominates his vision so that his image definitively conquers the eternal presence of desire, as it is in perpetual transit from one present to another,

There are three tenses: the past, the present and the realm of fantasy. Clearly, the future tense can be the "What if?" tense. We live in the now but we are influenced by the past, which we cannot change except in our memories. The present is made of the past. It is the tense I like to think of as the eternal present.³⁴

In conclusion of this inconclusive inferential walk through Fellini's magic world, I would like to remember the closing sequence of *Lisbon Story* (1994), one of Wim Wenders' latest films. After an extenuating and intensely didactic *tirade* on the status of the filmic image, one of the protagonists, the director Manoel de Oliveira addresses the sound technician who, in the course of the story, had investigated the relationship between sound

and image meticulously, and yet had occasionally offered us moments of rare neo-baroque beauty. In his final comments, de Oliveira brings to a closure the long journey the German director has traveled with much of his cinema in the labyrinthine territory of memory, and states that "Memory is the only true thing. But memory is an invention." Here the ability memory has to invent, and thus create or rather recreate the past is recognized. This is the only "true" past, that is the one we can remember. The rest remains entrapped in the claustrophobic dichotomy "true/false" against which generations of witnesses collide. Fellini's position is quite similar as he always claimed the reasons of fantasy in the mnemonic exercise. Largely due to his constant challenge of the boundaries between true and false, real and imaginary, in time the Fellinian image has become a true simulacrum, and has been progressively appropriated, engulfed, and continuously replicated by and in the advertising image.

Indeed it is with the 1960s that publicity becomes increasingly oneiric, and records the progressive disappearance of the referent.

Il referente, che era il prodotto (e quindi doveva essere il termine finale della comunicazione pubblicitaria), si avvia sempre più ad essere il pretesto di partenza di una creazione immaginaria che poi "viaggia" per conto proprio nella memoria del pubblico.³⁵

[*The referent, which was the product (and thus had to be the final stage of the advertising communication), increasingly becomes the starting pretext for an imaginary creation which then "travels" on its own in the audience's memory.*]

In the gradual emptying out of the product from the body, from the referent-commodity, an emptying out which characterizes the advertising message of the 1980s-1990s, one can detect a fascinating play of mirrors: on the one hand, publicity will aim more and more at appropriating the larger filmic body, and in particular the body of a cinema with artistic temptations, that is *auteur cinema*; on the other, in the disappearance of the referent, and in the emphasizing of the desiring and seductive strategies of the advertising message, one finds the reasons for a temptation which is inherent in the Fellinian filmic image, the one toward the seductive discourse of advertising.

Leaving aside, then, the citational, digressive and supertextual use of paper and audiovisual advertising, one can state that starting in the 1960s Fellini's image irresistibly strives to construct itself according to the desiring logic which has come to characterize the messages of publicity, the logic which turns them into "traces," that is saturated, spacially and temporally synthetic images of our culture. Once it is emptied of the referent-commodity, publicity is nothing but the discourse of seduction and desire which builds itself according to the pleasure of repetition with a language grounded on the incessant game of the eternal *retour* of the already known and of the already desired.³⁶ In like manner, freed from the demands of the *récit* and of History, emptied of the referent, but tied to the game of the eternal *retour* of the already remembered, of the already dreamed and of the already desired large, alluring and phantasmatic eternal feminine, Fellini's image thus progressively aimed at constructing itself according to the seductive logic of dream and desire.

As an aside but not as a conclusion of this captivating journey in Fellini's world, Ivo Salvini's words in *La voce della luna* come to my memory once again, "...Come mi piace ricordare, piú che vivere. Del resto che differenza fa?"³⁷ ("...How much I like remembering! ...more than living! And after all, what is the difference?").

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¹ This paper was first presented in Italian at an international conference held during the 18th *Mystfest* in Cattolica, Italy, June 22-28, 1997. Paolo Fabbri and Mario Guaraldi edited the *proceedings* entitled *Mistici & Miraggi. Mystfest 1997* (Milan: Mondadori, 1997). The present English version is a translation with minor changes of the original Italian text. All translations from the Italian and the French are mine unless otherwise indicated.

² Federico Fellini, "Fatemi fare l'Italia. Goffredo Fofi intervista Federico Fellini," *Corriere della Sera*, Inserto 7.31 (1992): 34, "This contiguity, this extremely long, endless sequence in which my life unfolded and still unfolds, prevents me from thinking with nostalgia of a past — which, in any case, seems to me thoroughly invented — or of a future..."

³ William Shakespeare, *Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974): IV.1, p. 1630.

⁴ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1985): 152.

⁵ Baudrillard, *Simulations*, cit., 7. My reading of *La voce della luna* owes much to Millicent Marcus' accurate analysis in her essay "Fellini's *La voce della luna*: Resisting Postmodernism" included in her volume *Filmmaking by the Book: Italian Cinema and Literary Adaptation* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1993): 225-48. In that essay Marcus indeed suggests that in his last cinematic text Fellini defines at least the search for a possible resistance to the loss of meaning characteristic of the postmodern universe. My discussion is also indebted to Cristina Degli-Esposti Reinert's study of the neo-baroque aspects of Fellini's last film in her "Voicing the Silence in Federico Fellini's *La voce della luna*," *Cinema Journal* 33.2 (Winter 1994): 42-55, and, of course, to Peter Bondanella's groundbreaking contribution to the understanding of Fellini's world with his *The Cinema of Federico Fellini* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1992).

⁶ Baudrillard, *Simulations*, cit., 141.

⁷ Italo Calvino, *Autobiografia di uno spettatore* in Federico Fellini, *Quattro film* (1963; Turin: Einaudi, 1974): xxiv. The essay was then republished as an introduction to the new edition of Federico Fellini's *Fare un film* (1980; Turin: Einaudi, 1993).

⁸ Calvino, *Autobiografia*, cit., xviii.

⁹ It is interesting to note that Calvino already indicated that these are the two directions by which it is today possible to define the cognitive function of the cinema of close observation. *Autobiografia*, cit., xx.

¹⁰ Lietta Tornabuoni, "Sessanta-Novanta" in Federico Fellini, *La voce della luna* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1990): 11.

¹¹ In relation to this issue, see Roland Barthes, *Frammenti di un discorso amoroso* (1977; Turin: Einaudi, 1979): 74-5. In French, Roland Barthes, *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1977) translated into English by Richard Howard as *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978).

¹² On *trespassing*, and the eternal transit, see Mario Perniola, *Transiti: come si va dallo stesso allo stesso* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1985), but also Anna Camaiti Hostert, *Passing. Dissolvere le identità, superare le differenze* (Rome: Castelvecchi, 1996).

¹³ Federico Fellini, *La voce della luna* (Turin: Einaudi, 1990): 46.

¹⁴ Over the years Fellini repeatedly commented on this issue. For instance, see the interview given to Bruno Blasi, "Spot teppisti: intervista con Federico Fellini" in *Panorama* 27 (November 5, 1989): 55. See also the statements he made on TV commercials and television itself included in the volume edited by Charlotte Chandler, *I, Fellini* (New York: Random House, 1995): 224-7. As for a critical evaluation of Fellini's position, valuable suggestions may be found in Peter Bondanella's book (1992).

¹⁵ See Federico Fellini, *Fellini TV: "Block-notes di un regista"/"I Clowns"*, edited by Renzo Renzi (Bologna: Cappelli, 1972): 209-13.

¹⁶ Chandler, *I, Fellini*, cit., 194.

¹⁷ Bondanella, *The Cinema of Federico Fellini*, cit., 223.

¹⁸ Bondanella, *The Cinema of Federico Fellini*, cit., 222.

¹⁹ Calvino, *Autobiografia*, xxii.

²⁰ Roland Barthes, "Società, immaginazione, pubblicità" in AA.VV., *Pubblicità e televisione* (Rome: ERI, 1968): 172-3.

²¹ Bondanella, *The Cinema of Federico Fellini*, cit., 3-29. See also Angelo Olivieri, *L'imperatore in platea: i grandi del cinema italiano dal "Marc Aurelio" allo schermo* (Bari: Edizioni Dedalo, 1986) and Adolfo Chiesa, ed., *Amologia del "Marc Aurelio" 1931-1954* (Rome: Casa Editrice Roberto Napoleone, 1974).

²² Barthes, "Società, immaginazione, pubblicità", cit., 165-6.

²³ Serge Toubiana, "Chut! une image," *Cahiers du Cinéma* 431/432 (May 1990): 16. On the topography of contemporary desire, see Augusto Illuminati, *La città e il desiderio. Realtà e metafore della moderna desideranza* (Rome: Manifestolibri, 1992).

²⁴ Fellini, "Fatemi fare l'Italia," *ibid*, 30.

²⁵ Thierry Jousse, "La voce della luna. La fée électricité," *Cahiers du Cinéma* 431/432 (May 1990): 20.

²⁶ Barthes, "Società, immaginazione, pubblicità", cit., 166.

²⁷ Barthes, "Società, immaginazione, pubblicità", cit., 169.

²⁸ Barthes, "Società, immaginazione, pubblicità", cit., 169.

²⁹ For instance, see Peter Bondanella's exhaustive discussion of the text in which the critic rightly refers to the direct citation of a classic of the filmic representation of collective male desire, *King Kong: The Cinema of Federico Fellini*, cit., 159-63. See also the analysis by Brunello Rondi in his *Il cinema di Fellini* (Rome: Edizioni Bianco e Nero, 1965): 298-300; by Barthélemy Amengual, "Une mythologie fertile: Mamma Puttana", in Gilles Ciment, (a cura di), *Federico Fellini* (Paris: Éditions Rivages, 1988): 32-9, and Frank Burke, *Fellini's Films: From Postwar to Post-modern* (New York: Twayne, 1996): 113-23.

³⁰ Bondanella, *ibid*, 160.

³¹ Barthes, *ibid*, 173-4.

³² Gillo Dorfles, "Morfologia e semantica della pubblicità televisiva," in AA.VV., *Pubblicità e televisione*, *ibid*, 179-80.

³³ Roland Barthes, *La camera chiara* (Turin: Einaudi, 1980): 66-7.

³⁴ Fellini in Chandler, *I, Fellini*, cit., 285.

³⁵ Umberto Eco, "Ciò che non sappiamo della pubblicità televisiva," in AA.VV., *Pubblicità e televisione*, *ibid*, 204.

³⁶ Eco, "Ciò che non sappiamo della pubblicità televisiva", cit., 203. On the discursive strategies of advertising, much has been said. For example, see Alberto Abruzzese, *Metafore della pubblicità* (Genoa: Costa & Nolan, 1988).

³⁷ Fellini, *La voce della luna*, cit., 27.