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ALL FELLINI'S CHILDREN

Fellini's protagonist is not a "character", it is a way of being, way of existing, which the director fully defines through the protagonist's behaviour. [...] This anti-psychological cinema, however, reaches further and more deeply than psychology – it reaches the soul¹.

André Bazin

In Federico Fellini's entire filmography, the child in the sense of the protagonist of a story playing an important part in the plot appears rather infrequently. The director usually displays children's character traits in adults. For him, the child is mainly a symbol, a metaphorical figure of immaturity and transitoriness (sometimes eternal) in human life. Thus the prime object of his interest is young people at the threshold of adulthood, at least teenagers but usually physically mature, for in Fellini's works the child functions primarily in the psychological and mental, not biological sense. The subject of the present article is the motif of childishness and mental immaturity, which is manifested in the protagonists portrayed by Fellini². It is worth noting that this immaturity should not be regarded only negatively. It may be a quest for something, and the look through the eyes of a small boy is for the Italian director a perspective which is, in a way, more natural, intuitive and spontaneously creative, and, most importantly, resists social limitations awaiting people in adulthood.

¹ A. Bazin, "La profonde originalité des 'Vitelloni'", [in:] *idem, Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?*, vol. 4, Paris 1962, p. 144.

² The versions of the childishness motif presented here usually intermingle in the Italian director's oeuvre in a symbiotic manner. Therefore, the various types, character traits of the protagonists and suggested distinct interpretations should not be treated separately.

THE SYMBOLIC CHILD OR THE CIRCUS, THE CINEMA AND FELLINI

The last scene in *8 1/2* (1963). A short personal treatise on art. Explication of Fellini's views on film and creation in general. Four characters dressed as circus jugglers begin a procession in an empty, well-lit arena to the rhythm of Nino Rota's "vulgar" music. They are followed by a white-clad small boy. Soon he spontaneously starts to conduct the procession. The same function is performed by Guido Anselmi (Marcello Mastroianni), a porte-parole of the Magician of Rimini, who, in true director's fashion, caring for the form of the movement (holding a speaking tube and a hat as attributes of the director-Fellini), directs the actions of his actors/characters. For a moment we see in the foreground his friend Maurice, a magician-clairvoyant, who also helps the director. Then come all characters (projections in Anselmi's imagination), who have been coming and going throughout the whole film. Following Guido's instruction now, they hold their hands and together form a procession. Fellini uses these three individuals – Guido, Maurice and the Boy – to present his ideas about the creative process. In the previous sequence, during a press conference on the set of his film, Guido committed symbolic (artistic) suicide. It was a gesture of purification. With a child's fear Anselmi hid under the table, trying to escape the responsibility which was growing as the film production progressed. Guido has purified himself from the phantoms surrounding and pressurising him – the figures of journalists, producers and critics disappear immediately. Everything begins anew. A gesture similar to the tearing up a sheet of paper with the artist's ideas and throwing into a rubbish bin. The director takes another sheet of paper and again begins the game. The word "game" is very much correct here. The white-clad boy symbolises the artist's immaturity, but also – as the colour of his clothes suggests – innocence, truth, purity and simplicity. It stresses the element of constant search in creation. The final product, the work, is for Fellini only a result of social limitations; after all, it emerges when childish, intuitive playing of imagination is suppressed and rationalised by adults "playing with the cinema" – producers, critics and, finally, viewers, who have their own, specific expectations. Throughout our lives, be it artistic or emotional, we are immature. Fellini knows this very well. The adjective "mature" is associated with an end and for an artist can be the greatest insult. For Fellini art means both a quest and play. Writing down on a sheet of paper and throwing an empty sheet into the rubbish bin. It is about a process itself, even if this process is "dada" – a completely irrational game, play. The four circus artists only stress that. It is a tribute to the art of fairs, perhaps primitive, but also very spontaneous. A spectacle that is not necessarily used to talk about something important, but only to present one's skills. Sometimes the performance is more important to the performer than to the spectators themselves. First of all, it is an aintellectual performance. Was cinema

not such a vulgar curiosity at the beginning? After all, moving pictures were shown in tents, with no one asking what they meant and what they were for. This is how, sentimentally, little Federico remembers cinema – a performance in a circus tent, a performance with a very strong impact (not only on children), primarily emotional³. Fellini, too, seems to be telling us: “Don’t ask, just watch and feel. This is an expression of my personality, a way in which I see the world”. The scene also features Maurice. A conjurer, magician, clairvoyant, but, primarily, a fraudster, clown and liar – in a way, an eternal child, for even though he is an adult, he still functions in the sphere of dreams, art and fantasy. Thus, in this finale Fellini is in three persons. A fraudster-magician showing his tricks, a Boy who is playing – an adventurer stimulated by curiosity, a prankster – and, finally, an intellectual-director (Guido, entangled in “adult” relations), who tries hard, and always fails to some extent, to rationalise this layer of imagination comprising primarily emotions and chance (the duty to take into consideration producers, critics, viewers and himself). According to Fellini, art is not necessary for audiences, but is necessary for the artists. It allows them to continue their dreams, after they have woken up, through the creative process. Despite the fact that it has to be well-ordered and intellectual, it is first of all emotional, because it is made of human experiences and feelings. The creative process consists in giving a verbal form to what is intuitive and inexpressible. Cinema is conducive to this, because it does it largely by means of images (which are more spontaneous in reception, simply “childish”) rather than words (verbal semantics is the domain of adults). This very process was the subject of Fellini’s film, which can clearly be seen in its finale. The last scene of *8 1/2* shows the Boy in White – lit on the circus stage, alone, he has just finished directing his own dream. The light slowly goes out. The film has ended – what we have is a work of art which is in some respect unfinished and open, in other words – immature. The world of film images is for Fellini the world of circus – constant spectacle of creative imagination. The world of children and itinerant artists. Truly original cinema.

THE LITERAL CHILD OR A NEO-REALIST PANG OF CONSCIENCE

Children understood directly are characteristic of Fellini’s early works. They provide a background; when they do appear as more distinctive individuals, it happens only in rare episodes that complement the plot. The most representative example in this

³ After all, the circus is by its nature a place for children or adults, who would like to return in their emotions to their childhood. A space in which social conventions are suspended every day – a topsy-turvy world, constantly carnivalised, in which rules are determined by play and performance. This is confirmed by Maria Kornatowska in her monograph: “The circus myth also denotes the myth of lost childhood, naive faith, innocent purity of emotions” (*eadem, Fellini*, Warsaw 1989, p. 16).

case seems to be *Il bidone* (1955). The film is literally full of children and it must be said that their function for the story is mainly moralising. The eponymous hero is Augusto (Broderick Crawford), petty swindler, who together with two friends cons the poor from the slums – the children appearing in the background significantly stress the meanness of the swindlers' actions. At the beginning it seems that this cynical man has no scruples. Pretending to be a bishop – a Vatican envoy – he robs people living in provincial towns near Rome. The breakthrough comes in a sequence in which Augusto is recognised by one of his victims. This happens at the cinema in the presence of his daughter. Patrizia, whom he once left with her mother, is now a teenager. Despite Augusto's assurances that the whole situation is a mistake, the girl guesses her father's real profession. Augusto's own child becomes a catalyst of his transformation, becomes a cause of shame. Before, she was apparently a source of motivation for his swindles, as he wanted to help his abandoned daughter financially. Lost in Patrizia's eyes, Augusto does not, however, abandon his practices. It is only a meeting with another child – daughter of new victims of his "treasure trick" – that leads to a lasting change. Susanna is 18 (more or less the age of Augusto's daughter) and is lame – she functions in the film as an immaculate symbol of innocence. The money that Augusto and his mates intend to swindle is meant for her. In the spirit of neorealism, the figure of Susanna serves a didactic function. *Il bidone* is part of a collective portrait of post-war Italy in Italian cinema, a portrait of a country, in which people benefit from the misery, ignorance and poverty of others. This is not a world friendly to children. Throughout the entire film the children appear as a background, living as they do in poor conditions, treated as cheap labour (Susanna's sister who slogs away every day in the field) and as "yet another mouth to feed". Augusto takes the money and hides it from his companions. The viewers may think that there is something more behind this (returning the money to its owner, financing Susanna's treatment or Patrizia's education), that this time Augusto has ceased to be a cynic. The final scene in which, beaten up by his companions, he looks at children carrying brushwood, seems to confirm this transformation. With his last breath, at the threshold of death, he tells them: "I'm coming. I'm going with you."

Augusto's story is complemented by that of his fellow swindler called "Picasso" (Richard Basehart). Fellini plays it similarly – "Picasso" becomes a swindler to get money to support his daughter (Silvia) and wife, but he abandons his illegal practices, when his family discovers what he really does for a living. Shame before his own child becomes a reason to change.

THE OBJECTIFIED CHILD OR A HOLY FOOL

A world hostile to the child is also presented by Fellini, a bit as a fairy tale with an initiating function, in *La strada* (1954). Gelsomina (Giulietta Masina), a teenager, is

sold by her mother to an itinerant strongman, Zampanò (Anthony Quinn). She replaces her older sister, who died when she was travelling with the circus artist. Firstly, we need to stress that she is treated by her mother like her property, an object that she can sell for a healthy sum and get rid of a problem in the process. Secondly, Gelsomina seems to have some slight mental disability, which is somewhat shameful to her mother. In this work Fellini is very forceful in his emphasising of this aspect of childhood that brings the child's world to the world of the demented – profound sensitivity, naivety, unity with nature (i.e. with God's world), isolation from society by carers. This last characteristic can be seen in the scene when Gelsomina meets Osvaldo – a boy who is locked at home by his mother because of his intellectual and physical disability. He is regarded as the “village idiot”. Gelsomina is the only person that can make him laugh and, at the same time, understand. On the other hand, unlike little Osvaldo, she is not a child anymore in the physical sense. She is a woman and the female element is trying to get through in her, though this aspect is shown by Fellini only implicitly. The journey with Zampanò is, in fact, a journey of initiation. A painful passage into the world of adults. Gelsomina matures psychologically, experiencing violence but also love (she seems to be in love with Zampanò, later she becomes friends with a tightrope walker, “Il Matto”). However, she does not entirely change her childhood habits. She tries to persuade Zampanò to marry, by “playing the home game” – she plants tomatoes next to their cart, expressing her need to settle. She is jealous of the strongman's roadside mistresses in a child-like manner. *La strada* seems to be a cruelly reversed version of *The Kid* (1921) by Charles Chaplin. Fellini's inspiration by that film and the silent cinema star can be seen, for example in Giulietta Masina's acting.

Child-like qualities of a “village idiot” can be found in Uncle Teo, one of the protagonists of *Amarcord* (1973). The character is a grotesque depiction of man-child sexuality⁴. During a family trip to the countryside, the 42-year-old Teo, who is confined to a mental asylum, sneaks out into a tree and yells: “I want a woman!”. As relatives try to bring him down, he pelts them with stones. It is not until a dwarf nun arrives that the situation is resolved. The “ghastly” Teo (after all, we cannot say that his “child” demand got him a real woman), through his madness represents a child's world, not that of adults (he does not conform to social norms, pees in his pants). His name can also be regarded as meaningful – it expresses divine, not human world.

The bond between the child and nature, i.e. divine world, is also shown in *Satyricon*, (1969). A hermaphrodite, child of Aphrodite and Hermes (demigod), is treated by his carers like an object – a source of income. This “holy fool” sees more,

⁴ Fellini usually characterises child sexuality by its lack (*La strada*, *Nights of Cabiria*), negation or denial by the world of adults (Saraghina's rumba scene in *8 1/2*). Rampant sexuality, represented by adolescent boys, appears seriously in *Amarcord* (Titta's meetings with the woman at the tobacconist's and with Gradisca at the cinema). An untypical example of a child understood as a sexual object is Gitone (*Satyricon*), a bisexual lover-slave who is passed around.

prophesises like an oracle and heals the sick. The hermaphrodite is completely defenceless, though inspires universal respect and even fear of an unknown power. This is a kind of ancient version of the yurodivy⁵ – Christ’s madman, demented simpleton, whom Fyodor Dostoyevsky described in his novels. The hermaphrodite is a kind of holy fool, who can be also called child prodigy.

Another holy man, in a way, is the Grand Duke, one of the protagonists of *And the Ship Sails On* (1983). The very fact of belonging to a royal family suggests his divinity. He is an inward-looking little fatty, isolated from the rest of the passengers, who pronounces either ambiguous metaphors worthy of an oracle (“We are all sitting on the mouth of the mountain”) or onomatopoeias (“Boom, boom, boom”). Surrounded by interpreters and a host of advisers, he is deprived of independence and subjectivity (just like the Hermaphrodite in *Satyricon*).

In the above-mentioned films we can clearly see Fellini’s sympathy for these characters. Their perception of the world – full of freedom, natural honesty and sensitivity – is juxtaposed with rigid bourgeois conventions, limitations and cynicism of the adult world⁶. The holy fool is an *enfant terrible* in the culture of the philistines – feeling and able to act.

THE WOMAN AS A CHILD OR LIFE IN THE WORLD OF DREAMS

Among the characters that fill the world of Fellini’s pictures we find women whose qualities can be interpreted as those of children, taking several criteria into account. Firstly, a kind of childishness can be found in the asexuality of the woman or asexual attitude of others towards her. This happens in the case of Gelsomina. Her attachment to Zampanò is somewhat similar to the child-parent relationship, including all its consequences – subordination and dependence, but also lack of desire. Zampanò does not let her escape, punishes her with whipping, uses the whip to “teach” her to play the drum, as if she were a naughty child. He obviously does not treat her as a woman and Fellini himself does not give her such a shape. Her childishness is emphasised not only by her communication with the disabled Osvaldo, but also her skit about the wolf and the hunter, which attracts mostly children, who burst with sincere laughter. In some sense, Gelsomina understands more as a more sensitive individual, but she does not shy away from infantile behaviour either – she tries to

⁵ In old Russian “yurodivy” means “aborted foetus” and “dumb, mute”.

⁶ The situation looks a little bit different in *La Dolce Vita* (1960). In the miracle scene, village children who have allegedly seen the Madonna, stage their encounter with the divine world *post factum*, requested by the parents (who need to earn some money) and journalists (who seek sensational stories). They become puppets in the hands of the media and adults. The performance (i.e. play-mimicry) is later presented to the viewers as a “live” recording.

turn life into a circus game, she lives a life of fantasy, partly in a world of dreams. In her way of life, during her daily travels with Zampanò she plays improvised games -mimicries (“home game”, tending to her little garden). She is also characterised by innocence and honesty of a human being who is not ready yet for pragmatism and cynicism – an example here is the scene in which she refuses to help Zampanò with robbing a monastery. Similar character traits can be found in Cabiria also played by Giulietta Masina (*Nights of Cabiria*, 1957⁷). Cabiria is a prostitute with a golden heart. She resembles a child, like Gelsomina, in her naivety, faith in the goodness of the world and trust in people whom she meets. Just as Gelsomina, who undergoes initiation after the death of “Il Matto” and goes mad, Cabiria, in order to mature, has to be used by men twice – in the first and last scene of the film she loses all her savings and nearly dies. She recovers and lives on, because she is slightly more mature and stronger than Gelsomina. Yet she keeps feeding her soul with dreams – she wants to use the money earned from prostitution to buy a small house. Adulthood in this sense would mean an end to these dreams and, first of all, to the trust in life. In the figure of Cabiria Fellini strongly emphasised what interested him most in human beings – a liminal moment, when we are, in a way, suspended between one stage of life and another. For in fact, to a large extent Cabiria (less so than Gelsomina) is half woman (this is emphasised by her “adult profession”) and half child (the asexual depiction of her in the film). It is also worth noting that the director stresses some objectification as a constant cultural feature of children – Gelsomina was sold by her mother, Cabiria lives by selling herself (her body), though, significantly, *Nights of Cabiria* contain no typical erotic scene.

The most important aspect of childishness of such protagonists must be their rootedness in life on the side of fantasy and dreams. This would be confirmed by the third figure with regard to whom Fellini is critical for a change. She is Wanda (Brunella Bovo), the protagonist of *The White Sheik* (1952). Her dreams are rather girlish and sentimental – fuelled by popular adventure films. With her newlywed husband she departs from her provincial town for a holiday in Rome, wanting, like Madame Bovary, a better world than her bourgeois life. Her dreams are put to an end – though not really associated with some sobering change – by an encounter with her beloved hero, the White Sheik (Alberto Sordi). The actor who plays him turns out to be far from perfect, to put it mildly. What is missing here, however, is some more profound reflection⁸ – the heroine simply goes back to her old provincial

⁷ The character of Cabiria appears for the first time in an episode in Fellini's *The White Sheik* made five years earlier.

⁸ This may have been caused by the fact that Fellini set the film too strongly in the convention of *commedia all'italiana*, very popular at the time. It involved the so-called soft criticism of bourgeois society. It comically and grotesquely exaggerated the faults of the typical Italian national characters, showed the sham nature of living in the fantasy world, but, using the projection-identification mechanism, it left the viewers passive. *The White Sheik* was intended as criticism of this type of

life; there is no psychological metamorphosis, and the entire adventure is, in a way, invalidated by the silence of her husband and family. Wanda is only a type – a figure in the world of philistines. Immature and infantile because of her provincialism.

THE MAN AS A CHILD OR VITELLONE

Fellini looks at women always through the eyes of a child – usually an adolescent boy, though, as it turns out in his films, this characteristic perspective is also inherited by adult men. Especially if they live in the provinces. Maria Kornatowska describes this link very accurately:

Provincial life develops imagination, though it stifles the will to act. Imagination finds its fulfilment in dreams, in impossible escapes. [...] Imagination of a closed world feeds on myths and sees reality in a mythical manner. [...] Provincial life is not conducive to maturity. Time stands still, imprisoned in the repeatability of the seasons, situations and gestures. People grow old without crossing the threshold of maturity...⁹

“A symptomatic trait of the national character is – according to Fellini – immaturity, development arrested in adolescence, psychological and emotional block”¹⁰. Interestingly, in Fellini’s view such provincialism is a breeding ground for totalitarian attitudes. This can be seen in the memorable scene from *Amarcord*, in which the image of adolescent boys (*vitelloni*) masturbating in a car is slowly transformed into the image of Mussolini’s soldiers marching into the town portrayed in the film. Movement in both shots has the same rhythm, which further stresses the fact that fascism is a kind of collective masturbation, masturbation of crowds and thoughtless masses.

André Bazin, quoted at the beginning of the present article, has pointed out that after *I Vitelloni* (1953) Fellini created a new type of cinematic characters. It is not quite the figure of a child; after all, a child on screen usually requires in-depth psychological narrative, whereas Fellini, like a true anthropologist, studies external behaviour of human beings, creating abstract models from it. The *vitellone* is such a model of man-child, usually found among leading protagonists in the Italian direc-

cinema; the genre was transformed by the director (e.g. in its undoubtedly ostensible, ironic happy end), but not clearly enough, which is why the film seems incomplete and by far the weakest among Fellini’s works. That the director was inspired by *commedia all’italiana* can be also seen in the presence of Alberto Sordi, who regularly played the leads at the time, as the genre was developing. One of the best known examples of this type of comedy is *Divorce, Italian Style* (1961, dir. Pietro Germi), which won an Oscar. See also T. Miczka, “Śmiech, łyż i fanfaronada. Filmowa *commedia all’italiana* w latach 1940–1969”, *Anthropos* 2009, no. 12–13, http://www.anthropos.us.edu.pl/anthropos7/texty/miczka_2.htm.

⁹ M. Kornatowska, *op. cit.*, pp. 134–135.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 143.

tor's oeuvre. To a large extent it contains a portrait of a typical Italian or even a tiny fragment of the personality of every man, usually living in the provinces understood literally or (primarily) intellectually. It is a type, not a character. In Polish the term is translated as "wakoń" ("idler"), but its nature is idiomatic and regional, so it requires a precise definition. Vitellonism is a kind of male mentality a consequence of which is a state of being suspended between one's lost youth and unattainable adulthood. It is a state of eternal childhood, expressed in a fear of change, irresponsible way of life, emotional and mental immaturity. It lacks self-awareness and self-reflection, with real actions being replaced by dreams and repeated myths feeding the mind. Fellini portrays this attitude in a group directly in *I Vitelloni* and *Amarcord*, films referring to the times when he was growing up in the small town of Rimini. This quality is to be found in most of his most important male protagonists: Guido Anselmi (*8 1/2*), Marcello Rubini (*La Dolce Vita*), Snaporaz and Katzone (*City of Women*), the eponymous White Sheik, Casanova, Pipo Botticella (*Ginger and Fred*), or, indirectly, Fellini himself (*8 1/2*, *Rome*, *Amarcord*, *Interview*)¹¹. In order to describe this attitude as clearly as possible, I will refer to Casanova (1976). The eponymous hero (played by Donald Sutherland) is the fullest embodiment of the negative traits of a *vitellone*. Fellini talked about him with undisguised disgust: "Casanova is simply an Italian macho, always on the prowl, impossibly lascivious. We can call him an idler or even superidler. We will go back to this conversation, when I'm finally free of him"¹². What also appears in this film is the motif of an old man who remains a child until his death. An old man who usually demands care or splendour, behaves mischievously and does not observe conventions, lives a life of an adventurer and tries to win the race against time. This is what Casanova is like (something similar, though not as extremely disgusting, happens with the characters of Admiral and Pippo in *Ginger and Fred*). For the ageing Venetian, youth is the most precious object of desire, which makes him eternally immature and irresponsible in his actions. Successive conquests are for him not so much an erotic pleasure, for his mechanical sexual behaviour throughout the film does not allow the viewers to think so, but an ordinary element of play and game – each time Casanova gives a performance that is to confirm an illusion, he puts on a

¹¹ We could add here an endless list of secondary and collective characters. The most interesting among the examples not listed here seems to be the community of musicians in *Orchestra Rehearsal*. The artist, too, becomes an "eternal boy" as it were – a gentler variety of this type is represented by Il Matto the tightrope walker (Richard Basehart) in *La strada*, the prestidigitator Maurice in *8 1/2* or, in *I Vitelloni*, Leopoldo, an idle intellectual, and the famous actor whom he invites to the provinces to present his monodrama. Another type of emancipated idler (emancipated literally through action or symbolically by a change of mentality) is represented by Fellini himself (especially in *Rome* and *Interview*), Moraldo (*I Vitelloni*), who decides to leave his small town, the conductor from *Orchestra Rehearsal*, or Augusto, who in the final scene of the film (on the brink of death) finally ceases to be a "freebooter".

¹² Quoted after T. Kezich, *Federico Fellini. Księga filmów*, Polish translation by A. Gołębiowska, Poznań 2009, p. 230.

mask that for a moment allows him to live against nature and culture, that seemingly protects him against old age. This “eternal play” as the goal of life in itself enables him to exist in the illusion of his own theatre of youth. What counts for the protagonist are first of all the props, the context, the audience and not the sexual act itself, which is pushed to the background. Pleasure is to be found in the preparations, in creating a facade, not in the literal act. Giacomo surrounds himself with his toys – before an intercourse he winds up a mechanical golden bird and to the rhythm of its fluttering wings, he goes through with the intercourse, just as mechanically, without any emotions. Towards the end of the film he is left only with a huge doll, a substitute of a woman. What seems significant in this context (of theatre and play) is the scene of an erotic duel with the stagecoach driver at the English ambassador’s palace, staged to the delight of the *crème de la crème* gathered there. This episode combines all four types of play distinguished by Roger Caillois¹³. Casanova and his opponent – a simple stagecoach driver who boasts he can satisfy a woman seven times during one night – begin a competition (*agon*). Animal nature and spontaneity (nature) are juxtaposed with intelligence, technique and sophistication (culture). The Venetian swallows 18 eggs (to rejuvenate himself and ensure vital forces for himself), chooses a lover, prepares his props and starts his mechanical performance, in which Fellini stresses artificiality and pretence (*mimicry*) to the limits. Despite the fact that we cannot see pleasure on the face of Casanova’s partner, it is Casanova, contrary to the logic of competition, who is pronounced the winner over the stagecoach driver, whose lover cries with pleasure. Thus, the result is decided not by skill but by chance – personified by the audience’s whim (*alea*). Finally, both competitors find themselves dazed (*ilinx*), which can be seen in their mental trance and physical exhaustion. It is, therefore, not surprising, that the director himself is so critical of the character he created. However, it has to be said that Casanova is an extreme case. Fellini sees some tiny part of this attitude in himself and treats it as something unavoidable in life. We could say that in his opinion how we deal with it and what use we make of it testify to our maturity or lack thereof.

THE ARTIST AS A CHILD OR SUBLIMATION OF VITELLONISM

So far, interpretations of child-like immaturity, omnipresent and necessary in people’s lives have been associated in Fellini’s works with the figures of artists, who

¹³ Roger Caillois divided games in accordance with their dominant entertainment element. *Alea* — the course and result of a game are decided by chance, blind fate (e.g. dice); *agon* — the decisive element is the skill of the participants (sports competition); *mimicry* — involving reproduction, copying of reality (theatrical performance, role playing etc.); *ilinx* — inducing controlled daze in the mind and body (spinning, trance). See *idem, Man, Play and Games*, Polish translation by A. Tatarkiewicz, M. Żurowska, Warsaw 1997, pp. 15, 21–38, 43–46, 57, 62–64, 75–79.

appear in all his films and are by default linked to cinema, i.e. art of moving pictures, art that is intuitive both in creation and in perception. The way in which immaturity is rationalised and sublimated by an individual will testify to the artist's awareness and greatness. I will go back to *8 1/2*. Guido (and through him Fellini himself) can transform his innate vitellonism into experimental art. Dragged by the producers of his war film to a press conference, Guido tries to break free and shouts: "I want to go home", to which they reply: "Don't be a child". He expresses the idea of artistic cinema – a natural need for not making any compromises with the material and financial side of his project. In the various episodes Anselmi acts out successive infantile mimics: he becomes a cowboy, an adventurer and, finally, a tyrant (a characteristic attitude of three-four-year-old children) in his longed-for harem. Significantly, however, Guido uses these games for creative purposes. He transforms them into art – projections of imagination become images in the film. He represents the attitude of Moraldo, the protagonist of *I Vitelloni*, who had the guts to change and leave his town. He is like Fellini, who left his home town, Rimini, ostensibly to study law (he did not even begin to study it) and went to the Eternal City, which he showed in two of his films – *Rome* (1972) and *Interview* (1987). The character of young Federico, represented in the *Interview* by Serio Rubini, appears in a film within a film¹⁴. Rubini plays the director himself at the threshold of adulthood, but at the same time he also functions as the main character in a film adaptation of Franz Kafka's *Amerika*. Like Kafka's protagonist, young Fellini discovers his own America – in this case the film set. As a young reporter, he wants to conduct an interview with a film star, who, incidentally, is herself very infantile (no independence). In this scene Rubini has a large pimple placed on his nose, which emphasises his shyness and upcoming professional debut. The film set, like the circus arena, is the domain of eternally immature adults. It is a space of illusion, fraud and lies. "And what is film makers' job, if not conning others?", asks Fellini rhetorically in the *Interview*. On the other hand, his assistant, who appears in the film, claims that being an assistant is the best way to escape adulthood, i.e. "really serious" directing; the function of an assistant allows him to remain immature for ever.

Vitellonism, provincialism and immaturity may prompt some constructive action, they do not have to be manifested the way they are in the case of Casanova (who, incidentally, represents broadly defined impotence – vital, sexual and intellectual). The way we cope with social limitations that occur already in childhood – imposed by school or the church (an example of such limitations may be the rumba scene from *8 1/2* featuring little Guido and Saraghina) – constitutes the first rite of passage. In his films, Fellini shows life as a journey. Whether we are fully aware of it and can turn each experience into a psychological change – all this determines how we go through it. The magician of Rimini combines childhood and artistry. On

¹⁴ A film which Fellini is making, being at the same time its protagonist, i.e. *Interview*.

the one hand, he shows that we should draw on even the most infantile experiences of youth (Guido), and on the other he stresses that the less aware the creator and the less devoted to his art, the bigger the risk of primitivism (Zampanó), provincialism (the failed artist Marcello Rubini, Casanova) and artistic fascism (musicians in *Orchestra Rehearsal*). This message applies not only to art, but primarily to life. For if we cannot practise art, all that is left to us is to create our own life.