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A
Macmillan Films Inc.
FILM STUDY EXTRACT

8½

THE SARAGHINA SEQUENCE

NOTES AND ANALYSIS

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Macmillan Films Inc.

FILM STUDY EXTRACT

8½

(Italy, 1963)

THE SARAGHINA SEQUENCE

12 min.

NOTES AND ANALYSIS

By Marilyn Fabe

CREDITS

Director ..... Federico Fellini
Screenplay ..... Federico Fellini, Ennio Flaiano, Tullio Pinelli, Brunello Rondi
Photography ..... Gianni di Venanzo
Music ..... Nino Rota
Editing ..... Leo Catozzo

CAST

Guido Anselmi ..... Marcello Mastroianni
Cardinal's Secretary ..... Frazier Rippy
Cardinal ..... Tito Masini
Saraghina ..... Edra Gale
Guido as a Boy ..... Marco Gemini

Project Director: Willard W. Morrison
Editorial Consultant: Marilyn Fabe

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8½: PLOT OUTLINES AND THEMES

Plot Synopsis

8½ concerns a world famous film director, Guido Anselmi (Marcello Mastroianni), who, in the midst of making a film, loses his inspiration and begins to fear he will never complete the project. The crisis in his career, which occurs as he enters middle age, makes him question his talent as a filmmaker and brings to the surface conflicts in his personal life. He has been advised to visit a fashionable spa to relax and, he hopes, to overcome his malaise. But Guido's troubles — in the form of his producer, co-writer, production crew, cast members and journalists — follow him to the spa. Besieged by people who continually question him about his film, he finds little relaxation. While his collaborator on the script mercilessly criticizes his ideas, his producer becomes increasingly insistent that the film get underway. The casting director demands that Guido choose his actors, but the director finds it torturously difficult to make any decisions.

Guido, moreover, is overwhelmed by emotional demands made upon him. A French actress, already selected for a role, has become an irritating burden, desperately seeking the director's attention and support. Connochia, an elderly man who heads the production staff, not realizing that Guido himself is filled with uncertainty about the film and has no orders to give him, tearfully accuses Guido of casting him aside because he, Connochia, is too old. In a perverse moment, Guido invites his wife to join him at the spa even though his mistress is already there, adding to his misery. This precipitates a quarrel which threatens his marriage. His personal and professional life seem headed for disaster.

Throughout *8½* the linear development of the plot is interrupted by Guido's dreams, visions, fantasies, daydreams and childhood memories, all of which are evoked by his present crisis and, at the same time, are an integral part of the film he is trying to create. We gradually come to understand that the subject of Guido's film, which was originally to have been a science fiction spectacular (the last remnant of which is a gigantic spaceship tower by the sea), is Guido himself, a filmmaker in a state of

crisis. His dreams, which are really nightmares, reflect his anxiety; his visions, always of a beautiful girl in white, hold out an illusory promise of salvation and release from his mental stagnation; his childhood memories enable him to relive youthful experiences which have laid the foundation for his present conflicts; and his daydreams explore his deepest desires — which reality inevitably thwarts. As an example of the last, he imagines his wife and mistress amiably meeting, complimenting one another, and dancing off together in perfect harmony. This daydream becomes a full blown fantasy production in which he imagines himself the head of a harem comprised of all the women he has ever desired.

But no amount of fantasizing can stave off a disastrous resolution to his real life problems. His producer arranges a press conference to force him to say something definite about the film. Poor Guido, unable to answer the hostile questions of the press and threatened with ruin by his producer if he doesn't, crawls under the table and shoots himself.

This dire action turns out to be only another fantasy, and Fellini at once provides us with a more optimistic resolution. As Guido drives away from the news conference, apparently having announced that he is not making his film (to the joy of his collaborator who was certain the film would have been an aesthetic disaster), his head suddenly fills with images: first he sees his magician friend waving a wand and then the beautiful girl in white. Idealized images of the people from his past and present, inhabitants of his dreams and fantasies, then appear: Carla, his mistress; the aunts who took care of him as a child; Saraghina, the prostitute who initiated him into the mysteries of sex; the ancient Cardinal of the church; his mother and father. Jacqueline Le Bon Bon, a strip tease artiste whom we recognize from Guido's harem, walks alongside a tall graceful woman, a guest at the spa who has fascinated Guido because she resembles a statue of the Virgin Mary he remembers from childhood. The director feels suddenly strengthened and renewed by these images, able to love and accept them all. As a result, he no longer is frightened by the confusions and contradictions of his life. He asks his wife to accept him as he is, and she promises to try.

His creative crisis over, Guido picks up a megaphone and begins to direct the long delayed film. He gives a signal to the image of himself as a child (the source of his poetic inspiration as an adult) to open a white curtain at the bottom of the spaceship tower and down comes a long procession of people — his producer, friends of his wife, various guests at the spa, and so forth. For a joyous grand finale (which is also a beginning), Guido directs everyone to join hands in a long line and dance around a circus ring. Soon, only Guido as a child and a small band of clowns are parading in the ring. As they march off, the scene fades into darkness and the title *8½* appears.

Outline of Scenes in 8½

(1) TRAFFIC JAM DREAM. Guido, stuck in his car in the midst of a traffic jam, floats out of his car up into the sky but then falls into the sea.

(2) GUIDO'S BEDROOM IN THE SPA HOTEL. Guido awakens from his nightmare surrounded by nurses and doctors. Daumier, his collaborator on the film script, is also in the room.

(3) THE SPA GROUNDS. Guido, in line for mineral water, has a vision of a beautiful girl in white. Daumier criticizes the appearance of this girl in Guido's outline of the film. Mario Mezzabotta introduces Guido to Gloria, his young fiancée for whom he has divorced his wife of thirty years.

(4) TRAIN STATION. Guido meets his mistress, Carla.

(5) CARLA'S HOTEL DINING ROOM. Carla eats and talks non-stop about her husband.

(6) CARLA'S HOTEL BEDROOM. Guido makes Carla up to look like a whore and they make love.

(7) CEMETERY DREAM. Guido's father complains that his grave is too small. Pace, the producer of Guido's film and Connochia, the head of production, give Guido's father a negative report on his son's behavior. Guido helps his father down into his grave and is kissed passionately by

his mother. She, however, is transformed into Guido's wife, Luisa.

(8) THE ELEVATOR. Guido shares an elevator to the hotel lobby with a Cardinal of the church and his retinue.

(9) THE HOTEL LOBBY. Guido is surrounded by people who question him about his film.

(10) OUTDOOR NIGHTCLUB AT THE SPA. Guido continues to be questioned about his film. A magician, who is an old friend of Guido's, and Maia, a medium, read Guido's mind, evoking the strange words, "Asa Nisi Masa."

(11) A FARMHOUSE. Guido and several other children are bathed in wine lees. After his bath, Guido is wrapped in a towel and lovingly caressed by his aunts. When everyone else is asleep, one of the children tells Guido that if they repeat the magic words, "Asa Nisi Masa," the portrait of a saint on the wall will move its eyes and reveal the location of a treasure.

(12) SPA HOTEL LOBBY. The French actress implores Guido to tell her about her role. Returning a call to his wife in Rome, Guido asks her to join him at the spa.

(13) THE PRODUCTION OFFICE. Guido finds the production crew up late at night working on his film. Connochia accuses Guido of not confiding in him.

(14) GUIDO'S BEDROOM IN THE SPA HOTEL. Guido fears his crisis of inspiration is permanent. The beautiful girl in white appears and Guido begins to fantasize about her role in the film. The phone rings. Carla, he learns, is ill.

(15) CARLA'S HOTEL BEDROOM. While sitting with Carla, Guido wonders what he will tell the Cardinal the next day.

(16) THE GROUNDS OF THE SPA. Two secretaries escort Guido to the Cardinal. During the interview the Cardinal

calls Guido's attention to the sobbing cry of a bird. Guido, however, has become fascinated by the sight of a large peasant woman who triggers a childhood memory.

(17) THE SCHOOLYARD. Guido's friends persuade him to accompany them on a visit to Saraghina.

(18) THE BEACH. In exchange for money, Saraghina dances seductively before the boys. Two priests from the school apprehend Guido and drag him back to school.

(19) THE SCHOOL CORRIDOR. Guido is led past a row of disapproving portraits to the office of the Father Superior.

(20) THE OFFICE OF THE FATHER SUPERIOR. Guido is told his offense is a mortal sin. His mother, ashamed of him, rejects him when he runs to her for comfort.

(21) A CLASSROOM. Guido appears before his classmates wearing a dunce cap and a poster on his back reading SHAME.

(22) SCHOOL DINING ROOM. While the rest of the school has dinner, Guido is made to kneel painfully on kernels of corn.

(23) THE DECAYING SAINT. Guido kneels in meditation before a decaying female saint.

(24) THE CONFESSIONAL. A priest in a confessional tells Guido that Saraghina is the devil.

(25) BEACH. Guido returns to visit Saraghina.

(26) HOTEL DINING ROOM. Daumier criticizes Guido's inclusion of the Saraghina memory in his film.

(27) STAIRWAY TO THE STEAMBATH. Guido joins a long procession of people descending the stairs to the underground baths of the spa.

(28) PUBLIC STEAMBATHS. Guido sits next to Mario Mezzabotta (see scene 3), but is unable to make contact

with his friend. A voice summons him to an interview with the Cardinal. On his way to the interview, members of the production staff accost him with advice.

(29) THE CARDINAL'S CABANA. The Cardinal tells Guido that outside the church there is no salvation.

(30) MAIN STREET OF THE RESORT TOWN. Guido encounters his wife Luisa. Later they dance together at an outdoor cafe.

(31) THE SPACESHIP TOWER BY THE SEA. Pace leads a group of people up the gigantic tower. Guido, remaining below, confesses his confusion and uncertainty about the film to Rosella, a friend of Luisa's.

(32) GUIDO'S HOTEL BEDROOM. Luisa accuses Guido of being unfaithful. They quarrel bitterly.

(33) AN OUTDOOR CAFE. Guido, Luisa and Rosella are seated together at a table when Carla appears, infuriating Guido's wife. Guido daydreams that the two women greet one another and dance off.

(34) THE FARMHOUSE. Guido imagines himself back at the farmhouse of his youth. He is the head of a harem comprised of every woman he has ever desired.

(35) MOVIE THEATER. Screen tests are in progress for Guido's film. When Luisa sees an actress playing the part of herself asking her husband for a divorce, she walks out, threatening Guido with divorce. Claudia, the actress who is to play the role of the beautiful girl in white, appears at the theater and Guido leaves with her.

(36) A PIAZZA AT NIGHT. Disillusioned with his star, Guido tells Claudia that there is no film. Just then, his producer drives into the square announcing that a press conference is to be held at the spaceship site the next day.

(37) THE SPACESHIP TOWER BY THE SEA. Unable to answer the hostile questions of reporters, Guido crawls under the table and shoots himself. This is only a fantasy,

but he has decided to abandon the film. Ordering the tower dismantled, he drives away. Images from his imagination inspire him anew and he decides to direct the film after all.

(38) A CIRCUS RING. The cast of *8½* joins hands and dances around the circus ring. Soon only Guido as a child and a group of clowns remain. The scene fades out and the title *8½* appears on the screen.

Theme and Structure of 8½

8½ is Fellini's avowedly autobiographical account of the forces, external and internal, that inhibit the creative genius of a filmmaker. Through the power of his artistic recollection and fantasy, Guido Anselmi (Fellini's representative in the film) uses his imagination to explore the maladies that afflict his imagination. The record of his search is the substance of the film, which, as Christian Metz has observed, is Fellini's "powerfully creative meditation on the inability to create."[1]

Much of the richness and fascination of *8½* results from what Metz calls its *construction en abyme* or "double mirror construction." Like a double mirror, *8½* reflects itself into infinity. Metz writes:

> *(8½)* is not only a film about the cinema, it is a film about a film that is presumably itself about the cinema; it is not only a film about a director, but a film about a director who is reflecting himself onto his film. It is one thing for a film to show us a second film whose subject has no relationship, or very little relationship, to the subject of the first film . . . it is entirely another matter to tell us in a film about *that very film* being made . . .[2]

Even the film's title is self-reflecting. According to Angelo Solmi, before Fellini made *8½*, he had made seven-and-one-half films. The title *8½* was a name given to the new film during production which later he decided to use as the official title.[3] That Fellini's *8½* is the very film that Guido Anselmi is trying to create becomes apparent when we see actresses auditioning to play characters

who play parts in the film we are presently watching. Every criticism that Guido's collaborator on the script makes about the intended film — that it lacks a philosophical premise; that it consists "merely of a sequence of fortuitous episodes"; that the childhood memories are "bathed in nostalgia"; that the symbolic appearance of the girl in white is the worst symbol in the film — could apply not only to Guido's script but to *8½* as well, obscuring the difference between them.

The critics who claim that the film's happy ending is unlikely and implausible fail to understand that the subject of *8½* is not the triumph of do-it-yourself analysis but the triumph of art. As a film within a film, everything in it takes place in the imagination (Fellini's), one step or more removed from literal reality. Fellini indicates that his protagonist's crisis could have a potentially disastrous resolution by having Guido crawl under the table and shoot himself. But the subject of *8½* is not life as is but the creative resourcefulness of the imagination which can forge a great success out of the conflicts and failures of life. If Guido's spirit had not been infused with the guilt engendered by his Catholic education, if he were not, in consequence, profoundly ambivalent about the Church, if he did not desire at once two opposite types of women — we would never have the Saraghina sequence, the meeting with the Cardinal in the steam-bath, the harem fantasy, all brilliant film episodes that grow directly out of the conflicts of the filmmaker.

The moving finale of *8½* celebrates in a frankly symbolic way the triumph of the imagination. When the director joins hands in loving acceptance with all the significant people in his life, who, for better or worse, have made conflicting demands upon his psyche — his parents, his aunts, Saraghina, the priests from his school, the Cardinal, his mistress, his wife — Fellini affirms the relation between conflict and creativity: conflicts that are irreconcilable in life can be momentarily and joyfully resolved in the charmed circle of art.

THE EXTRACT

Plot Synopsis of the Extract

(Scenes 16-26)

The extract begins as Guido, on his way to an interview with the Cardinal to discuss his film, walks through a wooded section of the spa grounds in conversation with the Cardinal's secretaries. During the interview, the high church dignitary, an ancient looking man, questions Guido not about his film but about his life, inquiring if Guido is married, if he has children, his age. He then directs Guido to listen to the cry of a bird, but Guido, looking over his shoulder, notices a heavy-set peasant woman carrying a basket, her skirt raised above her knees. This sight triggers a childhood memory.

Guido, aged about eight, escapes from the schoolyard of his Catholic boarding school to join his friends on an expedition to see Saraghina, a wild-looking prostitute who lives in an old blockhouse on the beach. In exchange for money, the woman begins a suggestive dance, a cross between a rhumba and a strip tease. Guido, shoved forward by his friends, begins to dance with her. But just as she lifts him up into the air, two stern looking priests from the school appear in search of the runaway. Guido is captured and dragged back to school to face his punishment. In the office of the Father Superior he is told that his transgression is a mortal sin. His mother, overwhelmed with shame for what her son has done, rejects him. Guido's schoolmates holler and jeer when he appears in class wearing a dunce cap and a poster saying *SHAME*. While the others are having supper and listening to a priest read aloud from the life of the pious Luigi, a saint noted for his abhorrence of women, Guido is made to kneel painfully on grains of corn.

Next we see Guido in meditation over the mummified remains of a decaying female saint. In confession he is asked if he is aware that Saraghina is the devil. His ordeal over at last, he kneels before a statue of the Virgin Mary. But this statue dissolves into Saraghina's blockhouse. Despite his punishment, Guido soon returns to the scene of the crime.

Another dissolve transports us to the present. The Cardinal and his retinue now appear in a restaurant. At a nearby table, Guido and Daumier, his collaborator on the script, are discussing the episode we have just seen, the Saraghina sequence. Daumier complains that the episode is merely a childhood memory, bathed in nostalgia, with no true critical awareness of the Catholic experience in Italy.

A Note Regarding Aspect Ratio

8½ was photographed for projection in an aspect ratio of 1.75:1 (ratio of width to height). The extract (and the frame blowups in this booklet) are reproduced in that ratio. Since most 16mm projectors have an aperture plate fixed at 1.34:1, the image as projected in 16mm has a black area above and below the picture which would be masked out in 35mm projection.

The Context and Themes of the Extract

Although the Saraghina sequence can be enjoyed as a self-contained episode, it becomes even more interesting when viewed in relation to *8½* as a whole and to Fellini's life. As Fellini has told us, the Catholic boarding school is modeled on a school he attended in his youth. This school, he claims, had "a tremendous influence in determining the way my mind works . . ." Fellini remembers that "the discipline . . . was medieval . . . for such small boys (I was only eight or nine) the way they disciplined us was very harsh indeed. For example, one of the most frequent punishments was to make the culprit kneel down on grains of Indian corn for half an hour . . . and was often very painful." This, we see, is the punishment suffered by young Guido in the film. Detailing other cruel ways in which the boys were disciplined, Fellini speculates that the severe treatment of such young children is "the sort of thing that might cause serious mental problems, serious complexes." He adds: "the feeling of guilt I drag around with me, which I can't really place, probably derives from the fact that I spent four or five years in that school."[4]

In *8½* Fellini condenses "four or five years in that school" into one traumatic episode. Although Saraghina is a genuine figure from Fellini's past,[5] he was never in actuality punished by the priests for his association with her. But the fictional linking of Saraghina with the school contains an important emotional truth: Guido's Catholic upbringing, Fellini implies, has taught Guido to associate his natural impulses for freedom and sexual pleasure with guilt and punishment.

The nightmare that opens *8½* illustrates the way Guido as an adult is still dragged down by feelings of guilt. Guido is stuck in a mammoth traffic jam, a fitting symbol for his creative block. Suffocating in his own breath, he frantically tries to escape from the car. At last he gets out through a tiny crack in the window and finds himself triumphantly rising above a long line of stalled traffic below, and then soaring, free as a bird, over the sea. But a rope ominously tied around his leg suggests that his freedom will be short-lived. An attorney on horseback dressed in a costume of the Middle Ages — a reference to the "medieval discipline" of the school as well as to a galloping superego — proclaims: "Down, down without appeal," and Guido, shrieking with terror, plummets toward earth.

This nightmare sequence is structurally and thematically nearly identical to the Saraghina sequence, indicating that the childhood memory and the nightmare are intimately connected in Guido's mind. Both sequences begin with images of confinement: Guido as an adult is stuck in a traffic jam and trapped in his car, while Guido as a child is enclosed by the high walls of the schoolyard (Fig. 1) and encircled by the arm of a looming statue of a church dignitary (Fig 2). Just as Guido in the dream escapes miraculously from the car, Guido in the memory escapes miraculously from the schoolyard. In one shot we see him running out of the enclosing arm of the statue toward frame right, and in the next shot we see him continuing to run, also in the direction of frame right, but now he is on the other side of the wall running with his friends. The position match makes the action seem one continuous sprint, as if he has magically leapt over or through the wall. In both dream and memory he escapes to the free and open realm of the sea. The memory reaches its high point of pleasure and gaiety when Saraghina lifts Guido

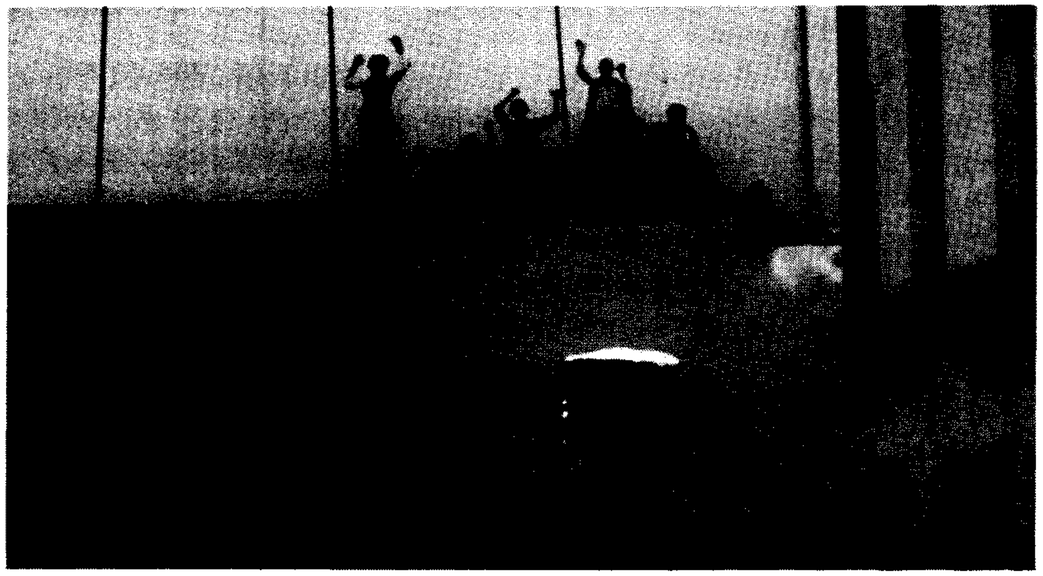

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

up into the air and we see him momentarily framed only by the sky. But, as in the dream, his rise heralds a fall. He is brought plummeting to earth, first in the comic collision with the priest, but then, more painfully, when he is forced down on his knees in pain and humiliation by his stern prosecutor.

Many of the fantasies and daydreams that occupy Guido throughout *8½* relate thematically and structurally to the Saraghina episode. They, too, build to a climax of pleasure or hopeful expectation only to be followed by a crash. Guido's fantasy of receiving a revelation from the Cardinal in the steambath, for example, begins in high hope. He is assured by his co-workers, who voice his own wishes, that the Church can give him everything he needs in life. But the fantasy ends in disappointment as the door to the City of God squeaks shut in his face. Even the harem fantasy in which Guido's erotic wishes are spectacularly fulfilled — he possesses at once all the women he has ever desired — ends in a nightmarish revolt which Guido must put down with a whip. (Although it is explained that the revolt is staged nightly to add excitement to his life, the fantasy that begins in harmony and joy ends, nevertheless, on a note of guilt and despair.) Thus the pernicious influence of Guido's childhood experience is still felt, not only in his nightmares but in his daydreams and fantasies as well. Until the finale of the film when the imagination triumphs, the soaring spirit of the artist is always grounded by guilt.

The one sequence in the film that does not conform to this pattern is set in Guido's early childhood, before the Church has infused him with guilt. In this episode, which takes place in his grandmother's farmhouse, Guido and his cousins are being bathed in wine lees, following an ancient family ritual to assure that they will grow up strong and healthy. After his bath, Guido is wrapped in a large white towel and adoringly caressed by his loving aunts. As he is being tucked into his specially heated bed, one aunt declares that he is the sweetest boy in the world. The sequence ends as Guido and a cousin repeat the magic words, "Asa Nisi Masa," hoping to discover a treasure buried in the wall. There is no letdown in this sequence; it evokes pleasant feelings — sensual pleasure, warmth, security, and the childhood faith in ritual and magic. But the pleasurable associations of this

recollection help us to understand the serious consequences of Guido's overly severe punishment for his interest in Saraghina.

In confession, when Guido responds to the priest's question, "Don't you know that Saraghina is the devil?", Guido's answer, that he didn't know, is quite sincere. His romp on the beach with the prostitute, we can infer, is not very far removed in his experience from the sensuous pleasure of his aunt's caresses. But his natural delight in such pleasure is suddenly defined by the Church as mortal sin. When a child is forced to relinquish an infantile pleasure too abruptly, especially one in which he has been previously overindulged, he may become fixated on it. There is ample evidence in *8½* that Guido has never stopped seeking maternal figures to caress and adore him. His harem fantasy, accordingly, is set in his grandmother's farmhouse; once more he is bathed, wrapped in towels, and called "the sweetest boy." Among the women he imagines in his harem are Saraghina and the aunts. Despite Guido's rule that once a woman reaches the age of 26 she must move to separate quarters upstairs, the aunts and Saraghina, clearly overage, remain firmly ensconced below with the youngest and sexiest of Guido's ménage; they have become permanent fixtures in his erotic imagination.

Despite Guido's punishment by the Church, he nevertheless returns to visit Saraghina. Here, Fellini implies that rather than repressing Guido's budding sexual impulses, the punishment has had the opposite effect: he is more fascinated than ever with the mysterious woman who is such an abomination to the Church. But Fellini's dissolve of the statue of the Virgin Mary into Saraghina's blockhouse (Fig. 3) indicates another future ill effect of the incident: the Church's punitive attitude toward sex has helped to institute a fatal split in Guido's love life as an adult, which Freud referred to as "the most prevalent form of degradation in erotic life" or the Madonna-whore complex. Guido's wife is a Madonna. When she first appears at the spa the background music is "Blue Moon," identifying her as a chaste Diana figure. Guido's love and admiration for his wife has made her a tabooed object, not to be contaminated by his sexual desire, which the Church has impressed on his mind is shameful and disgusting. Not surprisingly, he is always "too tired" to make love to her.

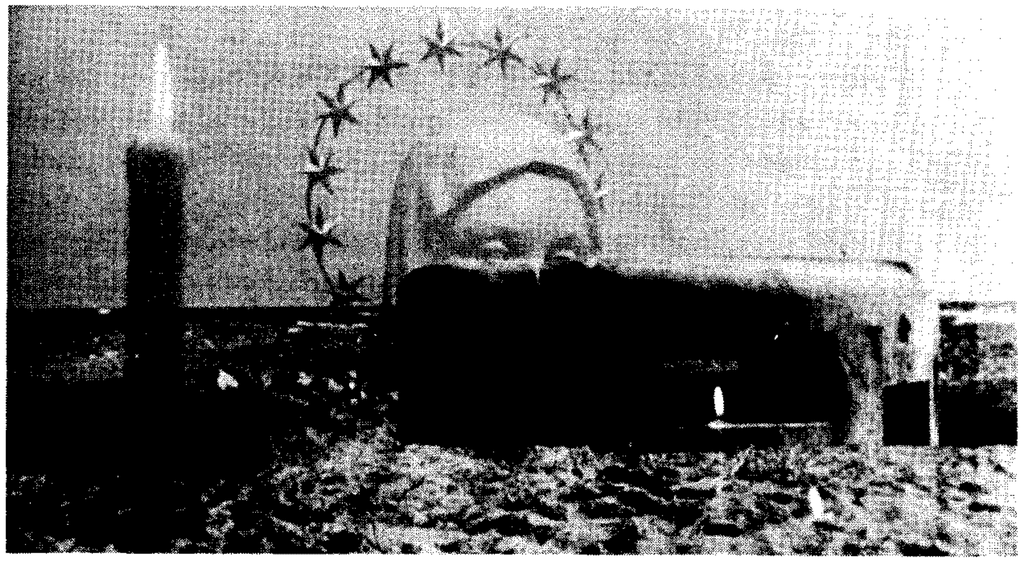

Fig. 3

Sex is permissible only with "bad" or "degraded" women. The plump, voluptuous Carla is a tamed and refined — but not too refined — version of Saraghina. In an earlier episode of the film, when she begins to sound too much like a wife, Guido makes her up to look like a whore and tells her to pretend that she has wandered into his room by mistake. Unable to combine his feelings of tenderness and love with his erotic desire, Guido's creative energies are drained by his guilty search for the "perfect" woman who will heal his Church-inflicted psychic wound. This woman lives only in his imagination as the beautiful girl in white, played by Claudia Cardinale, who appears to him variously as nurse, lover, muse, and bride. But Guido, who is tempted to write this woman into his film as a figure who can redeem his protagonist — just as Fellini has suggested that the lovely girl in white who calls to Marcello at the end of *La Dolce Vita* could be his salvation — realizes the falseness of such a symbol. His journey into himself has revealed that his problems lie within. As he tells Claudia, the actress who is to play the role of the girl in white, "No woman can change a man." The lovely vision does not appear in the finale which celebrates the artist as he is and recognizes that while his guilt-inducing conflicts hold him back, they are also the raw material of his art.

ANALYSIS OF FILM ELEMENTS

SYMBOLISM

Guido Anselmi is not the typical adult visited by childhood memories; he is a deliberate artist — a filmmaker — recreating in his chosen medium a crucial childhood experience. Thus Fellini does not present Guido's memory of Saraghina as a conventional film flashback — that is, he does not try to create the illusion that what we are seeing "really" happened in just this way when Guido was a little boy. Rather, the memory is presented in a distanced, highly stylized manner, embellished with symbolic overtones and satirical thrusts. Although the flashback takes us thirty-four years into Guido's past, his mother appears as an old woman, a relic from the present superimposed onto the past. The priests at the school are played by women with shaved heads, their male voices dubbed in. As one critic notes, this touch makes Guido's accusers seem "far less wholesome than the company they have snatched him from."[6]

To visually demonstrate how Guido's Catholic upbringing has shackled his spirit, Fellini, in a wonderfully exaggerated way, opposes the constricted realm of the Church with the open anarchic realm of Saraghina. Saraghina's home is the wide open spaces of the seaside. Everything about her is exposed to the elements — her hair blows wildly, her feet are bare, she bursts out of her dress, her movements are fluid and uninhibited. In contrast, the priests who come after Guido are living symbols of confinement: their long black robes appear particularly incongruous against the dazzling white of the beach. Moreover, by accelerating the motion as the priests chase Guido, Fellini exaggerates to the point of caricature their stiff mechanical movements. But as silly as they seem, they are also invested with surprising power. As Guido flees from the priest who chases him from the left, it appears at first that he may outdistance his pursuer; but then he collides with the second priest, who suddenly materializes from frame right to block his passage. Even in the unbounded realm of the sea, the Church manages to block and confine. Once Guido is back at school, the open space of the

sea is replaced by a narrow windowless corridor. Flanked by priests, Guido has literally become a prisoner. While Saraghina is associated with the lively art of the dance, the Church is associated with portraits and statues, static forms in which images of life are permanently frozen and fixed. As Guido is being led by the ear to his trial, he passes a row of portraits, stern-looking men of the Church who accusingly fix him with their eyes. At the end of the row, Guido's prosecutor is photographed to appear like one of the portraits uncannily come to life. More importantly, however, the juxtaposition makes the man seem hardly more alive than the pictures on the wall. Guido's mother, overwhelmed with shame at the behavior of her son, is seated near a large portrait of a little boy wearing a halo, the kind of child she would obviously prefer to Guido. But the implication of the portrait is clear: such little boys can only be found hanging on walls, forever imprisoned in idealized painted images. After confession, Guido kneels before a statue of the Virgin Mary. The Church's ideal woman is, appropriately, made of stone and looks down at the boy benignly but remotely.

PHOTOGRAPHY: THE MOVING CAMERA

Throughout *8½* the camera is rarely still, always roaming restlessly over people and objects in imitation of the eye of the director on whom nothing is lost. Because of the large number of subjective tracking shots in the film, the viewer becomes identified with Guido, caught up in his vision and in the chaotic pace of his life. In the scene in which Guido walks through the woods with the Cardinal's secretaries, the camera is continually in motion, literally following the conversation. This gives the conversation a hurried, perfunctory quality: the men of the Church are not really interested in Guido's film, nor is the director truly interested in consulting them about it. Seen from Guido's point of view, the secretaries look strange, their heads twisted around to address him in false civility. By photographing the clerics from slightly bizarre angles, Fellini subtly undercuts their authority, making their comments on Guido's film seem ridiculous.

As Saraghina dances on the beach, the camera swings around freely to follow her motions, but moves somewhat uncertainly up and down her body, pausing occasionally on the most awesome parts of her anatomy in imitation of the eyes of the boys who observe her with the slightly fearful fascination of precocious lust. By photographing Saraghina in huge close-ups that nearly burst out of the frame, Fellini makes her seem mythic, an elemental force larger than life (Fig. 4). The camera keeps its distance from the priests who pursue Guido to the beach: in contrast to Saraghina they appear diminished, like officious insects (Fig. 5).

Back at the school, the camera moves solemnly forward in straight lines to reveal painful and unpleasant static objects — the accusing portraits on the wall, the self-conscious sorrow of Guido's mother, the decayed face of the female saint who is intended as an object lesson in disgust for the female flesh. The camera movements in this portion of the extract are also characterized by rapid, jarring pans from the face of one priest to another and quick zooms into the faces of Guido's accusers, movements which add stinging emphasis to their cruel words.

SOUND

The sound track of *8½* is extremely important in creating mood, atmosphere and meaning. In the extract, the rhythmic pounding of the sea which, along with the music, accompanies Saraghina's dance contributes to her symbolic status as an elemental life force. Artificial, irritating sounds help to create the unpleasant and unnatural atmosphere of Guido's school. The piercing blast of the schoolmaster's whistle at the beginning of the flashback suggests that the boys are imprisoned even at play. The deadly silence of the school corridors is broken only by the faint but persistent ringing of a bell, as if life at school were a perpetual summons. The clamorous roar of Guido's classmates when he appears before them wearing a dunce cap is unnaturally loud, amplified by Guido's shame and humiliation. We have already mentioned the perverse effect Fellini achieves by giving

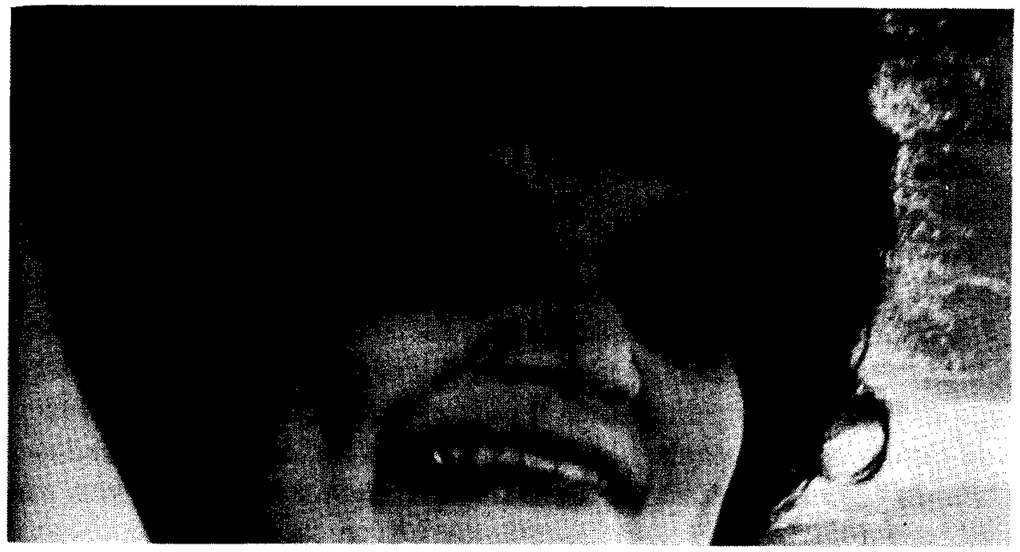

Fig. 4

Fig. 5

male voices to the female faces of the priests. (The voice of the priest who recites the life of the pious Luigi while Guido is kneeling on the grains of corn is Fellini's).[7]

Unlike the music in many films which creates a mood unobtrusively, Nino Rota's music in *8½* always playfully calls attention to itself. In the extract, Saraghina dances in rhythm to the music as if an orchestra were playing just off screen on the beach. As the boys clap with delight, their movements are syncopated to the musical beat. Fellini's editing rhythms are also carefully coordinated to the musical rhythms, the beat of the music often corresponding to the "beat" of a cut. For example, as Fellini cuts from the shot of Saraghina lifting Guido up into the air to the shot of the priests in pursuit of the sinner, there is a corresponding change on the sound track from the main Saraghina theme to the musical bridge. Previously this bridge has been associated with Saraghina's most provocative movements and seductive wiggles. When the same music accompanies the stiff awkward movements of the priests, it makes the men of the Church seem all the more repressed and ridiculous.

Saraghina is more than a purely positive figure who represents freedom and sensuality. At times she seems almost sinister. In an interview, Fellini has claimed that "to a certain extent Saraghina is and does represent the devil."[8] By making her home a World War II fortification, he associates her not only with the forces of life, but with those of destruction and death as well. The music helps to create this dual aspect of her character. At the beginning of Saraghina's dance the music is harsh and strident. This in conjunction with the extreme close-ups of her face and body make her seem slightly demonic, an overwhelming, almost dangerous figure. The boys, as if turned to stone, look on in silent awe. But, soon after, they are shown jumping up and down and clapping, clearly delighted by her performance, no longer afraid. The music reflects their mood, becoming jaunty and playful. Later, the music works to contradict the priest who tells Guido that Saraghina is the devil. When Guido returns to visit her, she is sitting by the sea, singing angelically. The rhumba music, now played slowly and sweetly, seems more a lullaby than a siren song.

EDITING

Fellini's editing imparts a dreamlike atmosphere to the Saraghina memory; incidents separated in time and space seem to flow smoothly into one another. After Saraghina lifts Guido into the air, for example, there is a cut to the two priests approaching and then a cut to Guido running away. Fellini does not dilute the impact of these actions by showing us Guido's first sight of the priests, his disengagement from Saraghina, the dispersion of his friends. As in dreams, the action follows a psychological logic: guilty pleasure is followed by the specter of punishment, which is followed by flight.

We have already discussed the directional match and the cutting on movement that transform Guido's impulse to join his friends into an instantaneous *fait accompli.* His return to the school from the beach happens just as smoothly and quickly. After Guido is captured, the camera moves up to show him being forceably escorted by a priest on his right. In the next shot, the space has changed — we are now back at the school — but Guido is still being escorted by a priest on his right. The position match creates a feeling of continuity in time despite the change in space.

Fellini's editing technique also works to create a sense of disorientation or dislocation that is commonly experienced in dreams, especially unpleasant ones. To achieve this dislocating effect, he deliberately breaks established rules of film continuity. For example, when Fellini cuts from a long shot of Guido in his dunce cap to a close-up of hands pouring corn onto the floor, we assume that the cut-in is a detail of the previous shot and that we are still in Guido's classroom. When the camera pulls back, however, we find ourselves in a totally different space, the school dining room. The change in space is disorienting because it is unexpected. (Conventionally, an establishing shot of a new location precedes close shots of details so that they will be seen by the spectator as part of the larger surroundings.)

In *The Technique of Film Editing,* Karel Reisz writes:

> The most elementary requirement of a smooth continuity is that the actions of two consecutive shots of a single scene

should match . . . if a scene is shot from more than one angle, the background and positions of the players remain the same in each take. Clearly, if a long shot of a room showed a fire burning in a hearth, and the following mid-shot revealed the grate empty, then a cut from the one to the other would create a false impression.[9]

Fellini creates these false impressions in several scenes in the extract in which the backgrounds from shot to shot do not match. The first instance occurs when the child Guido is being led to his trial. As he descends some stairs that lead into a corridor there is a cut to a slow tracking shot past a row of portraits ending with a close shot of Guido's prosecutor. (This appears to be a subjective shot in which we see the forbidding faces through the fearful eyes of Guido as he is being led past them.) But then, in the next shot, although Guido is still walking down a portrait-lined corridor, this corridor is quite different from the one we have seen in the previous shot (compare Figs. 6 and 7). A second example of mismatching, this time of the position of the players, occurs during Guido's trial. The room into which he is ushered is first shown to us subjectively, from Guido's point of view. The camera frames a row of four priests (Fig. 8). In the same shot, the camera pans right to the Father Superior seated at a large desk. A cut returns us to a medium close shot of the first priest (seated in the row), who says: "It's a mortal sin;" a pan to the right reveals the second priest who says, "I can't believe it." We naturally expect to see the third priest seated next to the second, but when the camera pans right again, the third and fourth priests — one standing, one sitting — are located in a far corner of the room (Fig. 9). In the last shot of this sequence — a long shot of the entire room — the four priests are once more positioned as they were originally, all in a row (Fig. 10). A final example of mismatching occurs near the end of the extract. The background of the subjective shot in which Guido approaches the confessional booth does not match the background when he leaves it. Although the confessional booth remains the same, the room is totally changed (compare Figs. 11 and 12).

Although many people may not notice that the backgrounds

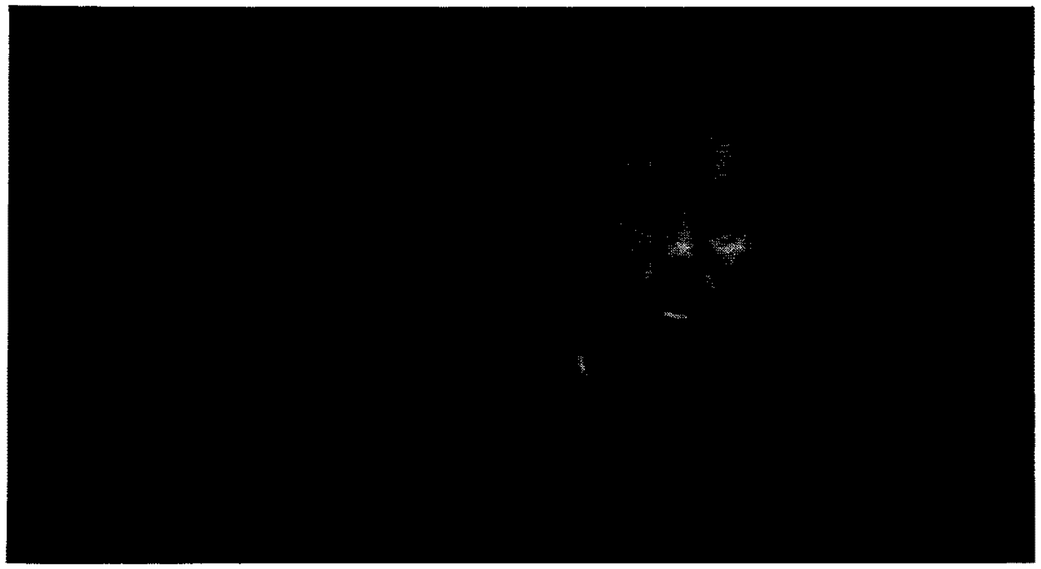

Fig. 6

Fig. 7

or players fail to match unless it is explicity pointed out to them, such shots, nevertheless, have a subliminally disorienting effect that works dramatically to identify the viewer with Guido's distress. Since the shots that do not match are usually subjective ones, we might also infer that Fellini intends to capture the distorting process of memory which makes the placement of people and objects of the past shifting and uncertain.

The mismatching shots have one other important function: those who are aware of them are made very conscious of the nature of the film medium. The fact that a film is constructed of pieces of celluloid spliced together becomes particularly noticeable when the pieces fail to match. Traditionally, filmmakers, especially commercial ones, work very hard to discourage awareness in the audience of the machinery behind filmmaking, trying to create the illusion of a continuous flow of life. *8½*, however, is a film about art, not life. The Saraghina sequence is a film within a film. Hence Fellini's calling attention to the mechanism of filmmaking is appropriate in the context of this particular film.

Fig. 8

Fig. 9

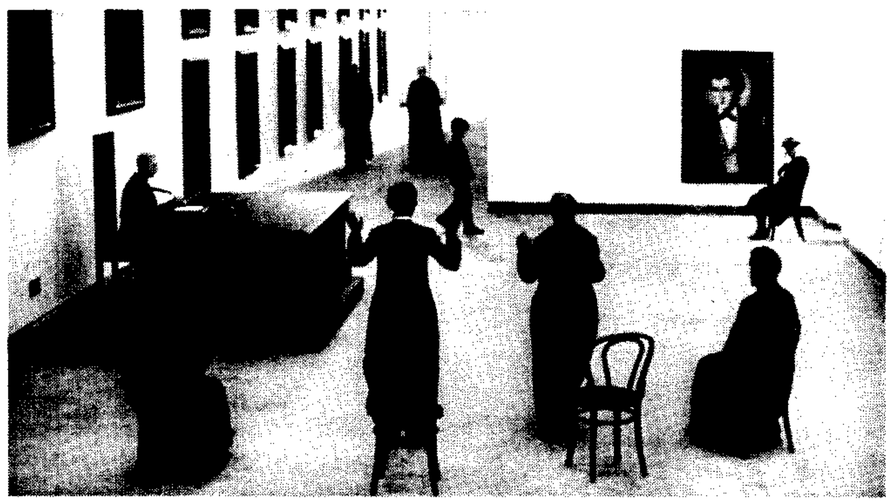

Fig. 10

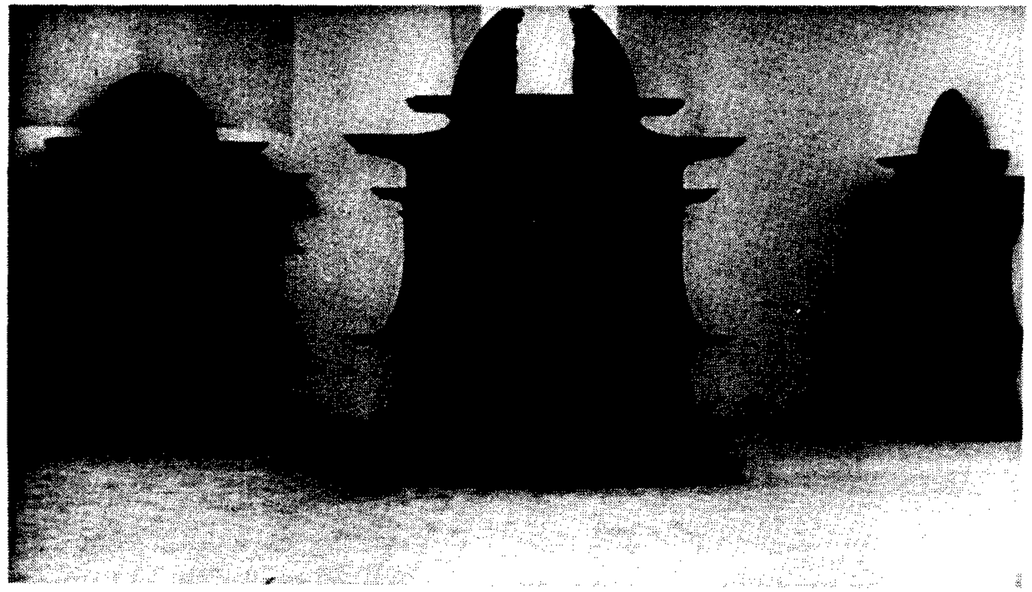

Fig. 11

Fig. 12

APPENDIX

Notes

1. Christian Metz, "Mirror Construction in Fellini's *8½*," in *Film Language* by Christian Metz, trans. Michael Taylor (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 234.
2. Metz, p. 230.
3. Angelo Solmi, *Fellini,* trans. Elizabeth Greenwood (New York: Humanities Press, 1968), p. 166 and 183.
4. Quoted in Suzanne Budgen, *Fellini* (London: British Film Institute, 1966), pp. 85-86.
5. Saraghina was a prostitute in Rimini (where Fellini grew up) who traded her services for the dregs of the sardine nets of local fishermen. In Rimini, sardines are called *saraghine.* For those interested in Fellini's account of his first encounter with Saraghina, see Deena Boyer, *The Two Hundred Days of 8½* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), p. 174.
6. Budgen, pp. 50-51.
7. Information imparted by Furio Colombo, a personal acquaintance of Fellini's.
8. Quoted in Solmi, p. 171.
9. Karel Reisz and Gavin Millar, *The Technique of Film Editing* (New York: Hastings House, 1972), pp. 216-217.

Suggested Extracts for Comparison and Contrast

There are similarities in style between Alain Resnais' *Last Year at Marienbad* and Fellini's *8½*. Both directors employ the flashback unconventionally and use smooth trans-temporal continuities to create worlds that exist only in the imagination of the filmmaker. A comparison and contrast of the extracts from these films provide an introduction to the expressive possibilities of breaking established film conventions. In this light it is also useful to compare the extract from *8½* with extracts from *Notorious* or *Spellbound,* films in which established film conventions are followed.

Recommended Reading

The original screenplay of *8½* is published in Camilla Cederna's *Fellini 8½* (Bologna: Capelli editore, 1965).

Deena Boyer's *The Two Hundred Days of 8½*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964) is a day by day account of the making of the film. An afterword by Dwight Macdonald contains a survey of the film's critical reception. It was reprinted in *Dwight Macdonald on the Movies* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1969), 15-31.

For a brief but excellent overview of Fellini's style and career through *8½* see John Russell Taylor's *Cinema Eye, Cinema Ear: Some Key Film-Makers of the Sixties* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), pp. 15-51.

Three useful books on Fellini, all of which contain critical evaluations of his films (at least through *8½*), interviews with Fellini, background on his life and career, and thorough filmographies are: Suzanne Budgen, *Fellini* (London: British Film Institute Education Department, 1966); Gilbert Salachas, *Federico Fellini: An Investigation into his Films and Philosophy*, trans. Rosalie Siegel (New York: Crown Publishers, 1969); and Angelo Solmi, *Fellini*, trans. Elizabeth Greenwood (New York: Humanities Press, 1968).

Finally, Ted Perry's *Filmguide to 8½* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975) contains complete credits, a Fellini filmography, an outline and analysis of the entire film, and an excellent annotated bibliography of critical writings on *8½*.