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FANTASY, FLESH AND FELLINI

The director of 'La Dolce Vita' and 'Juliet of the Spirits' baffles and enraptures audiences, is damned as a fake, praised as a genius.

BY THOMAS MEEHAN

Federico Fellini, a 45-year-old Italian movie director who has made, among other films, *La Strada*, *La Dolce Vita*, *8½* and the current *Juliet of the Spirits*, is obsessed with the human face. His offices in Rome are littered with thousands of closeup photographs of faces—people of all ages, types and descriptions whose faces have at one time or another interested him. Stuffed into overflowing filing cases, stacked on the floor, strewn on almost every desk, table and chair, and tacked all over the walls are Fellini's collection of some 30,000 such likenesses. When he is casting a new movie, a process that takes him months, he riffles constantly through these photographs, his face bearing the absorbed look of a man who has lost something vitally important but who is certain that it is somewhere frustratingly close at hand.

But Fellini does not cast only from stills. When he is about to make a new movie, he inserts this classified ad in all of Rome's daily newspapers: "*Signor Fellini sta preparando un nuovo film e gli piacerebbe incontrare chiunque lo vuole incontrare.*" "Mr. Fellini is preparing a new film and would be pleased to meet with anyone who would care to meet with him," that is, to talk about appearing in the film. And this one-line ad brings an enormous response, as thousands of pushing, shoving and shouting Italians line up in the streets outside his offices to be interviewed. Slouched behind a



For 8½, Fellini forced Sandra Milo to gain 20 pounds, but for JULIET she took 15 pounds off her normal weight.

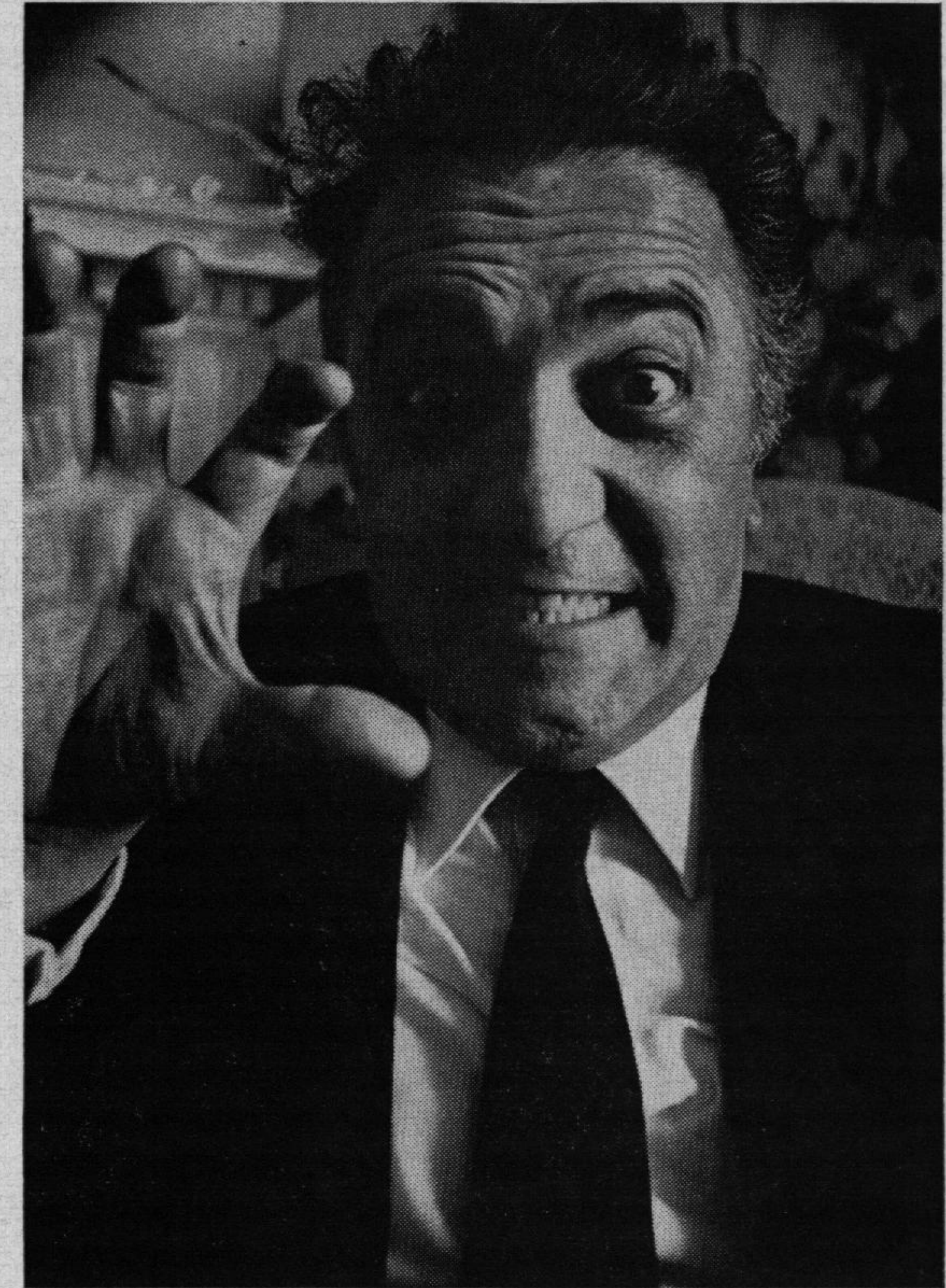
massive desk, Fellini intently watches the applicants file by, speaks gently and politely to each for perhaps a minute, asks that every 20th or so be photographed, and gives maybe one in 200 an on-the-spot screen test.

Of course, established professionals like Marcello Mastroianni are tested in private, but everybody gets essentially the same treatment. As a consequence, all sorts of people turn up in Fellini movies—bartenders, cabdrivers, prostitutes, derelicts, ditchdiggers, elevator operators. He is convinced that anyone who can relax enough in front of the cameras simply to play himself is almost always the best person for a role. Fellini sometimes uses this logic in casting lead roles. He cast his wife, Giulietta Masina, in the title role in *Juliet of the Spirits*, the painfully autobiographical—if symbolically represented—story of the Fellinis' marriage. *Juliet of the Spirits* tells the story from Miss Masina's point of view, as earlier, in *8½*, Fellini told it from his own point of view.

"For me, casting is the most important single element in film making," Fellini said when he was in New York recently for the American premiere of *Juliet of the Spirits*, "but it is very difficult to find the *one* person who will play the role better than anyone else possibly can." To find that one person, Fellini will go to any ends, sometimes holding up production for weeks at a cost of

thousands of dollars. He spent months searching for a 13- or 14-year-old girl who fit the vision he had in his mind of Paola, the young innocent who waves and calls out across the beach in the final scene of *La Dolce Vita*. When all normal casting methods had failed, Fellini went on Italian radio and television to describe the girl he was looking for, and, when this failed to work, he rented a theater in Rome and took a newspaper ad inviting all mothers of teen-age girls to bring their daughters to meet Signor Fellini. In an eight-hour period he studied, with no luck, the faces of more than 5,000 teen-age girls, a task that might have exhausted Humbert Humbert. Fellini had almost given up, when, in the midst of shooting *La Dolce Vita*, he went to a friend's house for dinner. Just as the meal was about to be served, his friend's 13-year-old daughter, whom Fellini hadn't seen in years, came downstairs to say good-night. "Paola," whispered Fellini, and the child, Valeria Ciangottini, was signed next morning for the part.

In the opinion of all sorts of people, from Mike Nichols to novelist Alberto Moravia, Federico Fellini is the best motion-picture director in the world, and they have arrived at this opinion from having viewed what, by Fellini's own curious count, are his nine-and-a-half motion pictures:



On a New York promotion trip, Fellini mugs in his hotel.



In a psychic sequence from JULIET, Fellini's wife, the actress Giulietta Masina, awaits apparition from lagoon.

The search is first for the right faces, then the script, then the voices.



Arriving in New York for the JULIET premiere, Sandra Milo received press and promotion people in sexy outfit.

$\frac{1}{2}$: *Variety Lights* (1950), a sad-funny depiction of a fourth-rate touring Italian vaudeville company which Fellini considers only half his own because it was co-directed by Alberto Lattuada.

$1\frac{1}{2}$: *The White Sheik* (1951), a broad lampoon of the Italian adult comic-strip industry.

$2\frac{1}{2}$: *I Vitelloni* (1953), the story of Fellini's young manhood in the provinces.

3: *Una Agenzia Matrimoniale* (1953), a segment of a four-part film called *L'Amore in Città*.

4: *La Strada* (1954), a poetic rendering of the wanderings about the Italian countryside of a brutish strong man and his innocent assistant.

5: *Il Bidone* (1955), a study of an aging confidence man, who fleeces gullible Italian peasants.

6: *The Nights of Cabiria* (1957), the serio-comic adventures of a woebegone Roman prostitute.

7: *La Dolce Vita* (1960), a satiric caricature of contemporary Roman high life.

$7\frac{1}{2}$: *The Temptation of Doctor Antonio* (1961), a segment of the four-part film *Boccaccio '70*.

$8\frac{1}{2}$: $8\frac{1}{2}$ (1963), an autobiographical portrait of a middle-aged Italian movie director making a movie about a middle-aged Italian movie director.

$9\frac{1}{2}$: *Juliet of the Spirits* (1965), the fantasies of a lonely middle-aged woman who becomes obsessed by ghosts, spirits and visions.

Among those who do not think that Fellini is the best director in the world—despite the fact that his nine-and-a-half movies have won more than 200 major international film prizes, including three Academy Awards—is Fellini himself, who, having seen only two of Ingmar Bergman's films, *Wild Strawberries* and *The Silence*, awards the honor to Bergman. Fellini doesn't much concern himself with such judgments, though, since he has one consuming interest—making movies.

Somehow, when Fellini is directing a film, he appears to be everywhere at once. One afternoon about a year ago when he was shooting a scene for *Juliet of the Spirits* on a beach near Rome, an American visitor got the distinct impression that Fellini was making the film almost single-handedly, though some 30 performers and an 80-man crew were also on hand. When filming on a beach, it is necessary to dampen the ground in front of the cameras so that as little sand blows as possible, and wetting down the ground is normally a job for a set hand. The visitor spotted Fellini, however, racing about with a watering can, doing the job himself. And, in the next glance, Fellini was spotted at the top of a 30-foot camera tower, scanning the scene below through a viewfinder, and, less than a minute later, there he was 100 feet down the beach sighting through a camera.

A big man, six feet tall, with a tendency to be somewhat bulky, Fellini manages to move about a film set with a great deal of natural grace and swagger. He is almost invariably dressed in the same outfit—black shoes, black socks, a dark blue suit, a white shirt, a black knit tie and a wide-brimmed Stetson-like hat in either black or white, which he wears pushed back jauntily on his head. A handsome man, with a graying mane of black hair combed straight back from a high, broad forehead, Federico Fellini is in many ways distinguished-looking. On the other hand, because he invariably needs a shave, wears his tie loosened at the collar, usually has a cigarette dangling from his lips and, in general, almost always looks a bit rumpled, he also could pass for a slightly down-at-the-heels confidence man.

He possesses, to an immense degree, the charm of a confidence man, having the knack of talking almost everyone into doing exactly what he wants him to do. While directing, Fellini frequently relies on straight charm to get the performance he wants out of an actor or actress. During the filming of *La Dolce Vita*, for instance, the French actress Anouk Aimée wasn't able to project two conflicting qualities that Fellini had ordered—a sense of cold, suppressed hysteria that nonetheless suggested a lost, sympathetic woman. After hours of patiently explaining what he wanted, Fellini at last tried another tack. He tried to break up Miss Aimée by doing a spirited jig, making funny faces and wildly waving his arms above his head while she performed. In her effort not to laugh at Fellini's antics, Miss Aimée became particularly tense, while at the same time her amusement showed through just enough to make her seem likable, and she ultimately gave a performance that critics called the best of her career.

Fellini's charm has more than once been responsible for getting actors and actresses, among them Anthony Quinn, Marcello Mastroianni and Giulietta Masina, to give the best performances of their careers. Miss Masina, a diminutive,

plumpish, slightly pop-eyed blonde, has given only drab and unimaginative performances when she has worked for other directors, while under her husband's direction she has been hailed in Europe as the greatest motion-picture actress of her generation—"a sublime combination of Chaplin, Harpo Marx and Greta Garbo."

After acting under Fellini's direction, performers tend not only to have nearly boundless respect for him as a director but also a deep personal affection. In fact, actresses who work for Fellini are forever falling madly in love with him, a circumstance that has often caused him some embarrassment, for while there's no getting around the fact that Fellini is something of a ladies' man, as frankly admitted in the autobiographical $8\frac{1}{2}$, he has been married to Miss Masina, more or less happily, for more than 22 years.

Fellini is popularly known throughout Italy as *il Poeta*, but he might more accurately be called *il Novellista*, for his methods are somewhat more those of the novelist than they are of the poet. Fellini once tried writing a novel, but didn't get very far with it. "I couldn't stand being alone all day, when I knew that outside everyone was having fun," Fellini remarked. "Later, when I got into the movie business, I discovered that film making exactly suited my temperament. A director, I found, could surround himself with people, could be laughing, talking, joking while he was creating a work of art. But, in a sense, I have not given up my interest in novel-writing. When I am directing a film, I am like a novelist who is writing a novel about a voyage while he is at the same time making the voyage. And I set about creating films perhaps in the way that Marco Polo sailed for the Orient, not knowing really what may happen along the journey or where the end may lie—on a voyage of discovery."

A Fellini film always springs from an original Fellini idea, often an extremely autobiographical one—a fact which he is only reluctantly willing to admit. "I like to think that my films are about all men, and therefore about me," Fellini has said. "In any event, I could scarcely say that they were about me, and therefore about all men. In creating a film, I most often begin with the slightest hint of an idea, a character, or a situation—it is a candle that magically lights itself in a vast, dark and gusty room. One must walk softly about the room, closing all of the windows, so that the flame will not blow out in the wind."

Once the flame of an idea has ignited in Fellini's mind, he has a series of preliminary talks with his three veteran co-writers—Tullio Pinelli, Ennio Flaiano and Brunello Rondi. If Fellini decides to go ahead with the project, he and his three co-writers go for a month or two to some quiet place such as an out-of-season Lake Como resort hotel. At the hotel the four men may talk for days about the film, often sitting up all night to discuss a minor character. "Ah, yes, and she will have had a mild case of polio when she was thirteen, and this will account for a slight limp and a certain sadness in her face," Pinelli might say, and Rondi will perhaps add that the character's father died when she was six years old and this affects her attitude toward older men. And Fellini himself may then describe the character in exact physical detail. "Federico has an incredibly visual cinematic imagination," one of his co-writers said not long ago. "He is the only man I know who thinks with a thirty-five-millimeter mind."

Fellini next assigns each of his three co-writers to write everything he can possibly think of about a character, a location or a scene that has been discussed. This phase often takes a couple of months, after which, though thousands of words have been written, there is still no scenario in the ordinary sense. By this time, however, Fellini has a pretty good idea of the sort of faces, voices, locations and sets that will be needed for the film, and he and his three co-writers then trek back to

Rome, where work on the script continues. Fellini next has a series of conferences with his permanent production staff, a loyal, enthusiastic and extremely hard-working cadre of some 30 assistant directors, technical directors, unit managers and production secretaries, perhaps the most important of whom are Piero Gherardi, Fellini's art director and set and costume designer; Otello Fava, his makeup man; and Clemente Fracassi, his chief of production.

After perhaps a year of concentrated seven-day-a-week, 18-hour days spent on the script, casting and searching for locations, Fellini quietly starts shooting his movie, first filming what is to be the opening shot of the picture and then attempting to continue in this manner, so that each scene is shot in the sequence in which it will eventually appear in the film. When shooting begins, however, there is still little or no dialogue written, and the last scenes of the picture have usually not even so much as been outlined.

"If I first carefully wrote out a completed scenario, I'd feel that the thing had already been accomplished in the writing—I'd have no interest in trying to film it," Fellini has said. "I love to improvise while filming—something unexpected in one scene suddenly leads perhaps to another scene I'd never dreamed of, and then to another. And I don't want to know where it is going or where it will end. A film—like a painting, a novel, a poem or a symphony—must be permitted to have an inner creative life of its own. It must not be like painting by the numbers."

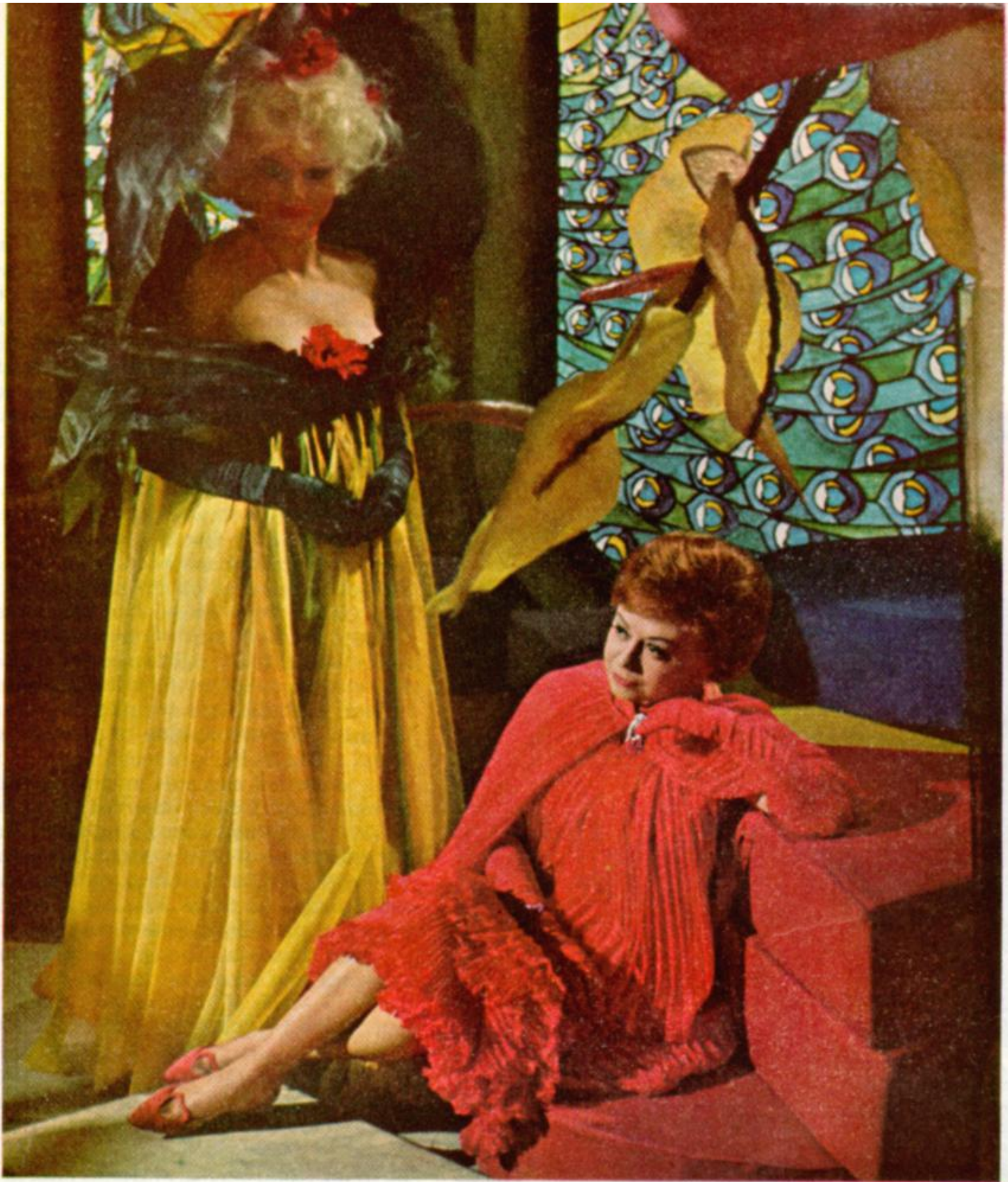
To get the performances he wants, Fellini resorts to an enormous variety of tricks. He will clown, as he did with Anouk Aimée, but he will also flatter, wheedle, whine, shout, sweet-talk, beg, ridicule and browbeat. And, in assessing the psychological makeup of the performers he is directing, he has an almost unerring instinct for the technique that will get the best performance from each player. Fellini is a tyrant on the set, and there is only one performance that an actor is permitted to give—the performance that Fellini *demand*s he give. When a scene is not going the way that he wants, he can be vicious, compelling performers to go through as many as 60 or 70 takes, until they're ready to topple over from exhaustion. And when a character in a film is supposed to be harassed, irritable and tired, Fellini will sometimes drive an actor through nine or ten hours of takes so that a mixture of these emotions gets onto film. He also demands that performers *look* precisely the way he wants them to. He forced Sandra Milo to gain 20 pounds for her role in *8½*, and then had the same Miss Milo, who is said to be a nervous wreck these days after having worked in two consecutive Fellini films, lose 35 pounds from her weight in *8½* for the three roles she played in *Juliet of the Spirits*.

Fellini never permits actors or actresses to see their lines until they are about to step in front of the cameras. "The lines are anyway most often not written until then," says Fellini, "but even when they are, I don't let actors see them. I want a sense of spontaneous conversation—not school children reciting lessons they have memorized. And if someone makes a mistake in his lines, that's sometimes all right, too—a film, like life, should contain natural mistakes."

Once Fellini has written the dialogue, he explains to the performers involved what the scene is about and the mood he wishes to achieve. Being himself an astonishingly talented actor and mimic, Fellini next gives each performer a full-scale

Dressed up for her glamorous party (top), Sandra stares while neighbor Giulietta wonders why she came. The movie bears certain parallels to the actual life of the Fellinis.

A bearded prophet, Giulietta's nemesis, arises from the pavement in another fantasy episode. The scene was cut, along with others, to shorten the film's running time.



His own private life
spills across the screen
in many films.



Directing his wife, Fellini can also provoke storms.

demonstration of how he wants the scene played, right down to the most subtle vocal inflection, facial tic or seemingly casual movement or gesture—and Fellini possesses the ability to transform himself in an instant into, say, a hip-swinging Via Veneto prostitute, a teen-age rock-'n'-roll singer or a doddering old man.

At times, when an actor or actress is not giving the performance he wants, Fellini will go into a violent temper. Among those who have been a target of Fellini's anger is his wife, Miss Masina, who came under strong fire during the making of *Juliet of the Spirits*. "Those who have seen *La Strada* or *The Nights of Cabiria* know her as a poignant clown, a comedienne who can wrench the heart," Fellini has said. "But that engaging creature had to go. We worked endlessly. And all along I knew what I was losing—but not what I was gaining. She found a thousand objections. This or that did not 'feel' right to her. And I became angrier and angrier. 'But don't you understand?' I would tell her. 'I want you to play yourself. What I'm asking you to do is what you always do—what I'm asking you to feel is what you always feel.'"

Those who witnessed the shouting fights between Fellini and his wife during the making of *Juliet of the Spirits* feared that the film could even lead to the finish of the Fellini marriage, particularly since Fellini decided that the picture could end logically only with what he called the "liberating" breakup of Juliet's marriage. Fellini and his wife have always fought when they worked together, however, and as a matter of fact it has been reported that Miss Masina stopped working in her husband's movies after *The Nights of Ca-*

biria solely to preserve their marriage, and that she agreed to make *Juliet of the Spirits* only with the greatest of reluctance.

The typical Fellini film, like *Juliet of the Spirits*, takes some six months to film, but the end of shooting is scarcely the end of Fellini's efforts to create a motion picture. There is still the cutting and editing. The first phase, preparing the rough cut, usually takes Fellini about a month of intensely concentrated 14-hour-a-day sessions. This is followed by the complicated process of dubbing—creating the sound track—which can be nearly as difficult as filming itself. In much the same way that he is obsessed with faces, Fellini is also obsessed with voices, and all during a film's preparation and shooting he casts voices, for most of the performers who appear in Fellini films are not represented on the sound track by their own voices. "It is unusual to find someone who both looks exactly right for a part and at the same time has exactly the right voice for the part—thus, I must always dub my films," Fellini has said.

Once the dubbing is completed, Fellini is ready to direct the preparation of the film's musical sound track. In Fellini's mind, music is one of the most important elements in creating a film, and, as many critics have observed, the background music to *La Strada* went a long way toward evoking the mood of lonely melancholy that Fellini was after, just as the brash, strident theme that ran through *La Dolce Vita* contributed in large degree to that film's sense of tension, frenzy and repressed hysteria. Though Fellini chooses all of the songs and scraps of classical music that turn up in the scores of his films, everything from *Yes, Sir, That's My Baby* to *The Ride of the Valkyries*, the original music for the films is always written by Nino Rota, one of Italy's foremost contemporary composers. However, Fellini himself composed the main musical themes for *La Strada*, *Nights of Cabiria* and *La Dolce Vita*, humming them for Rota, who then transcribed them.

When the musical sound track is ready, Fellini, alone with his chief cutter, Ruggero Mastroianni (Marcello's younger brother) and two or three close associates, spends a last two weeks or so making a final, polished cut of the film, and thus, some two years after the original idea, Fellini's voyage of discovery to create a motion picture has ended. It is at this point that Fellini inevitably plunges into deep melancholy, rather akin, one suspects, to postpartum depression.

"I try everything to get myself out of the depression, but the whole world seems flat and dull and stupid, and, in the end, there is really only one way for me to begin to be happy again," Fellini said soon after the completion of *Juliet of the Spirits*. "I must go on to my next film."

Fellini was born on January 20, 1920, in Rimini, a seaside resort city on the Adriatic some 75 miles east of Florence. His father, Urbano Fellini, who died 10 years ago, was a salesman, a successful, middle-class commercial traveler who sold coffee, sugar and rice to grocery stores. Fellini remembers his father as a gentle, melancholy man who was capable of occasional moments of compassion and quiet wit, but who, for the most part, had little apparent interest in his family. During his brief stays in Rimini, which were little more than stopovers between his continuing round of business trips, he seemed more an aloof visiting uncle than a father. In *La Dolce Vita* the traveling champagne salesman who comes to Rome to visit his son, Marcello, was a conscious evocation by Fellini of his father, as was Guido's remembered father in *8½*. Both characters were played by the same actor, Annibale Ninchi, who is said to resemble remarkably Fellini's late father.

As a consequence of his father's absences, Fellini was brought up by his mother, Ida Fellini, a small, placid woman. Besides Federico, there is

his brother Riccardo, two years his junior, who is today a minor movie actor in Rome, and his sister Maddalena, 10 years his junior, who is now a Rimini housewife. "My father had an eye for the women, and this led to many bitter quarrels between him and my mother, but my boyhood in Rimini was nonetheless an exceptionally happy one," Fellini remembers. Fellini's mother, who is now 70, has something of a talent for sketching, and this was passed on to her oldest son in the form of a natural aptitude for caricature, an art from which he made his living during two periods of his life.

In the summers of Fellini's boyhood, Rimini was a gay and lively city, filled with tourists who had come for a holiday at the shore, and there were always circuses, carnivals and vaudeville troupes in town, and on clear nights brilliant displays of fireworks on the beach. At an early age he became obsessed with the sea, and there are one or more important seaside scenes in almost all of Fellini's films, particularly in his earlier films, *I Vitelloni* and *La Strada*. In *La Dolce Vita*, the final scene takes place at the edge of the Mediterranean.

Fellini got his schooling at a private Catholic boys' academy 30 miles north of Rimini, and it was there, in revolt against the provincial priests who were his teachers, that he early developed strong anticlerical feelings, which have evidenced themselves in almost all of his films and which have frequently got him in trouble with the hierarchy of the Italian Catholic Church. His talent for caricature, especially his comic drawings of his teachers, got Fellini into a fair amount of trouble at school, but he was a bright student and at 16 was graduated close to the top of his class.

Fellini recalls an incident that occurred at school during a slide-illustrated lecture on the life of St. Francis of Assisi. "I was about twelve at the time," he remembers, "but most of the boys were older, and one of them had got hold of a slide showing a naked girl that he slipped in with the other slides, most of which were reproductions of paintings of St. Francis. Suddenly, in the darkened lecture room, the picture of the naked girl appeared on the screen. I've never forgotten the shock of that moment, and I can't help but think that this little episode planted an interest in film-making in my subconscious."

Fellini seems to have had no early conscious interest in films or film-making. As a boy, except for an infrequent Saturday-afternoon excursion to an American Western—Tom Mix being his favorite in those silent-film days—Fellini rarely went to the movies, though his early attitude toward films is perhaps significant. "What fascinated me was that I thought the actors made the films themselves," Fellini has said, "deciding, as they went along, how they were going to make the movie, depending on what they felt like doing. Only later did I discover that there was such a thing as a director. But I've never been able to get over the desire to make films in the way I thought Tom Mix had: without knowing, at the beginning, how they would come out exactly and having all the fun I could in the meantime."

Despite his fondness for Tom Mix, until he actually found himself in the film business in 1940, Fellini had seen only about two dozen movies in his entire life, and even today he sees few movies, perhaps two or three a year. "I can't sit still in the dark long enough to watch someone else's movie," Fellini explains. "Besides, I'm afraid that if I see too many films by other directors, I'll be influenced too much by them. As it is, people are always telling me what films have influenced me. Dozens of people have explained to me, for example, that *8½* was influenced by *Last Year at Marienbad*, but I've never seen *Last Year at Marienbad*."

Fellini's strong dislike for going to the movies does not extend to having another look at Fellini films, each of which he has seen dozens of times.

His enthusiasm for his own films is perhaps best illustrated by a story his friends tell of Fellini's first night in New York during his first visit to America in the spring of 1957. At the time, tickets for *My Fair Lady* were all but impossible to get, but a friend had managed to get Fellini two tickets. Fellini, who likes going to the theater even less than he likes going to the movies, impulsively gave the tickets away outside the theater to two amazed passersby, and, with his friend trailing behind, Fellini then spent the next four hours exploring Times Square, wandering dazedly along West 42nd Street from Nedick's stands to Army-Navy stores to pinball parlors, studying in awe, amazement and considerable disbelief the incredible assortment of local grotesques. By 12:30 A.M. even Fellini, with his obsession for unusual faces, had had enough of Times Square. Then his friend bought a newspaper and noticed that an East Side art-film theater was showing *The White Sheik* and *I Vitelloni*. At once Fellini hailed a cab and off they went. By the time they got to the movie theater, the last show of the evening had just ended, but that didn't stop Fellini. Using all of his charm, plus two \$20 bills, he persuaded the projectionist and the theater manager to screen the films for him privately. "So, on Federico's first night in the United States," recalled his friend, "he sat up until nearly five A.M. in an empty theater watching, in utter rapture, two of his own movies."

When he was 12, Fellini, who has been fascinated by circuses as long as he can remember, ran away with a traveling circus, but he was quickly brought back home. This was the first overt indication of his discontent with life in Rimini, a discontent which became increasingly stronger as he grew older, and, on January 20, 1937, his 17th birthday, he took an early-morning train, leaving Rimini for good.

He worked briefly in Florence as a newspaper copyreader, then moved to Rome. There he set himself up as a free-lance artist, a calling which in Fellini's case consisted mainly of doing caricatures of the customers in sidewalk cafés. During this period Fellini fell in love with a young semi-Bohemian set of aspiring actors, artists and writers. A few of the writers in the crowd were contributing pieces to a weekly satirical magazine

Many Fellini pictures made money for everybody but Fellini.

called *Marc' Aurelio*, and Fellini soon also began writing for *Marc' Aurelio*, mostly short comic sketches about the misadventures of a young provincial married couple named Cico and Pallina, who were a kind of Italian version of Dagwood and Blondie. These pieces quickly became the magazine's most popular feature, and soon became the basis for a successful weekly radio situation comedy, written by Fellini.

One of the actors Fellini had met was a comedian named Aldo Fabrizi. Early in 1939 Fabrizi was signed to star in a touring vaudeville show and asked Fellini to come along to write comic material. Fellini agreed, and for the next year he journeyed all over Italy. "That was perhaps the most important year of my life," Fellini said not long ago. "As we went about the country from town to town, I discovered, in an almost mystic way, a sense of the mystery of the Italian character. I was overwhelmed by the variety of the country's physical landscape and, too, by the variety of its human landscape. It was the kind of experience that few young men are fortunate enough to have—a chance to discover the character and identity of one's country and, at the same time, to discover one's own identity."

In the spring of 1940, when the troupe returned to Rome, Fabrizi was offered a part in a movie, and he arranged for Fellini to write the script. The film, a comedy called *Avanti C'è Posto*, was an immense hit, and Fellini was at once in great demand as a film writer. Over the next three years, until the late summer of 1943, when the Germans occupied Rome and closed down the Italian movie industry, Fellini wrote the scripts of some 50

comedies. Though he made a good deal of money out of all this, Fellini lived on a lavish scale, as has always been his habit when he has had money, and when the Germans moved into Rome, he was all but broke. The Nazis began conscripting Italian men for military service and work in slave-labor camps, and, not having the least interest in either of these pastimes, Fellini swiftly took to the city's slum districts. There, like thousands of other Romans, he passed his days dodging the Germans and simply trying to stay alive.

A few months earlier Fellini had switched on the Cico and Pallina radio show and been intrigued by the voice of a new young actress, Giulietta Masina, who was playing Pallina. Fellini sent her flowers and a note asking her to dinner. She accepted, they dined the following night in a restaurant overlooking the Tiber, and at once, Fellini recalls, they fell deeply in love. They were married on October 30, 1943, at a time when Italy was being bombed by the Allies almost daily, when the Germans were still in possession of Rome and when Fellini was penniless, jobless and all but homeless. Early in their marriage the Fellinis had a son, who died at the age of three weeks, and they since have been childless, a circumstance that has greatly saddened Fellini, for he is enormously fond of children.

On June 4, 1944, the Allies liberated Rome, and Fellini decided to make use of his talent for caricature. Borrowing money from a friend, he opened up a place he called, in English, the Funny Face Shop, where he did caricatures of American soldiers for 50 cents. The Funny Face Shop was a terrific success, and within three months Fellini had opened four branch shops.

One fall evening in 1944 Fellini was visited by Roberto Rossellini, a film director whom Fellini knew slightly. During the German occupation, Rossellini had been forced to make propaganda films for the Nazis, but he and his crew had also secretly filmed the almost daily skirmishes in the streets of Rome between Italian resistance fighters and the Germans, and Rossellini proposed a semi-documentary movie that would incorporate this footage. He had a general story line and wanted Fellini to help him with the script. Fellini agreed, sold the Funny Face Shops and plunged back into film making.

The film was *Open City*, the first and perhaps the most famous of the so-called *neo-realismo* postwar Italian films—movies shot on actual locations with a largely non-professional cast. *Open City* was a spectacular international success, and Fellini went on, in the next four years, to become Italy's leading writer of *neo-realismo* films. He was responsible for the scripts of some eight major movies, including *Paisan* (1946), *The Miracle* (1948, in which Fellini played a major on-screen role, that of the shepherd) and *The Windmill on the Po* (1949). In those years Fellini worked not only with Rossellini but also with the directors Pietro Germi and Alberto Lattuada. For several years Fellini had wanted to become a director, and early in 1950 he proposed to Lattuada that together they make a film about a broken-down touring vaudeville company. Lattuada liked the idea, and agreed to let Fellini co-direct. Then, deciding to produce the picture themselves, the two men sunk their life savings plus every *centesimo* they could borrow. The picture, *Variety Lights*, was the first film in which Giulietta Masina was starred, but this didn't help matters, for the movie was a total flop and Fellini and Lattuada were unable to pay their creditors. After *Variety Lights* had been running only a few days, the negative and all prints of the picture were impounded by the courts and locked away in a bank vault where they remained until 1956, when Fellini finally scraped together enough money to reclaim his film.

Though *Variety Lights* had been a disaster, Fellini decided that he would like to spend the rest of his life directing movies. Assembling a staff of



Anthony Quinn played the brutal strong man of *LA STRADA*, working with Fellini every morning until 10:30, then speeding to another set to play *ATTILA THE HUN*.

some of Rome's brightest young starving film makers, many of whom are still with him today, and borrowing money until he once again was in debt, Fellini then made *The White Sheik* in the spring of 1951. It was a spoof of Italian costume epics and was both a critical and a box-office success all over Europe, although, by the time he had paid off his debts, Fellini barely broke even.

Fellini made so little money out of *The White Sheik* that he and Miss Masina were somewhat shamefacedly forced to live on the income she made from working in costume films of the exact sort Fellini had kidded. But the financial success of the film meant that he was able to get backing for his next picture, *I Vitelloni*, an autobiographical rendering of his young manhood in Rimini, which he made in 1953 and which many critics still consider his best film. A sentimental and at the same time critical evocation of a time and place in memory, *I Vitelloni* dealt mainly with a sensitive young man who rebels against his family and the stagnant culture in which he has been raised and leaves them behind to become a writer.

I Vitelloni had the kind of success that a young motion-picture director dreams of—it was an uncompromising work of art that received high critical praise and, at the same time, cleaned up at the box office, especially in Italy. It also established Fellini throughout Italy as the most promising young film director of his generation. But because of a wrangle with his original producer, who had wanted sex put into the picture, Fellini had had to switch producers in mid-film, at the cost of signing away his own financial interest in the movie. He was thus as broke as ever.

Having made nothing out of the first three films he had directed, Fellini decided to produce his next film, *La Strada*—a picture he had been dreaming of making for years—entirely on his own, again with borrowed money. *La Strada* was once more to be about a subject with which Fellini is obsessed, a symbolic traveling troupe of lowly entertainers, but, in this instance, he reduced the group to two performers—a brutish strong man, Zampano, and his innocent girl assistant, Gelsomina. From the moment he first conceived *La Strada*, Fellini had envisioned his wife as Gelsomina, but he had seen no actor who fitted his mental picture of the strong man, even though he'd spent months searching all over Italy, screen-testing more than 200 men, including a couple of dozen real strong men.

In April, 1954, Miss Masina had again taken a role in a costume picture, *Attila the Hun*, in which the title role was being played by the American actor Anthony Quinn. One evening shortly after the filming of *Attila the Hun* had begun, Fellini drove wearily out to the studio at the edge of Rome where the film was being made. Trudging onto the set, Fellini spotted Quinn, whom he had never seen before. "That's him," Fellini said to his wife, "that's the face I've been seeing in my mind for ten years, that's Zampano!"

One of those who well recalls this occasion is Quinn himself. "The first time I ever even heard of Federico Fellini," Quinn recalled recently, "was when Giulietta Masina dragged me over to meet him. Right away he started telling me about a movie that he was going to direct and that I was going to star in. Something about a strong man and a half-witted girl. I thought he was a little bit crazy, and I told him that I wasn't interested in the picture, but he kept hounding me for days.

"Then, one evening a couple of weeks later, I had dinner at Ingrid Bergman's apartment in Rome—she's an old friend from Hollywood who was then, of course, married to Roberto Rossellini. After dinner they showed a movie, *I Vitelloni*, and I was thunderstruck by it. 'That film is a masterpiece,' I told Rossellini. 'Who directed it?' 'A friend of mine named Federico Fellini,' Rossellini said. 'Fellini!' I shouted. 'That's the one who's been chasing me for the past two weeks.'

"I immediately decided that I'd make the film with Fellini, and when I told him this the next day, he was delighted, and he happily announced that we'd start filming the following day. I pointed out to him that I was already working in a picture, but he suggested that since filming on *Attila the Hun* didn't start each day until noon, I could work for him in *La Strada* in the morning. 'Impossible,' I said, but the next thing I knew he'd somehow persuaded me to do exactly that—I found myself getting up at three-thirty A.M. to work in *La Strada*. In the dark of night I'd drive out from Rome to whatever location Fellini was shooting at, get into costume and makeup, and at dawn we'd start shooting, getting precisely the bleak, early-morning light that, I soon discovered, Fellini had anyway planned to use in the film. At around ten-thirty A.M., I'd jump into my car and go tearing off to the *Attila the Hun* set, where I'd frequently work until ten or so at night. This schedule accounted for the haggard look I had in both films, a look that was perfect for Zampano but scarcely OK for Attila the Hun.

"As soon as I started working for Fellini, I realized that he was far from crazy, that he was, in fact, the most talented, intelligent, sensitive and perceptive director I'd ever worked for. And Fellini drove me mercilessly, making me do scenes over and over again until he got what he wanted. But making *La Strada* was one of the greatest experiences of my life—I learned more about film acting in three months with Fellini than I'd learned in fifty movies I'd made before then."

About a month after the filming of *La Strada* began, Fellini ran out of money and, when he told Quinn this melancholy news, Quinn went to Dino De Laurentiis, the producer of *Attila the Hun*, and asked him to put up the money for Fellini to complete *La Strada*. De Laurentiis agreed. "And so *La Strada* was made," remembered Quinn, "and its success changed both my life and Federico's life. *La Strada* was the best thing that ever happened to my career, but I must say that in the past ten years I've got awfully tired of its theme music. Everytime I walk into a restaurant or a nightclub where they've got musicians, they start playing it. It's driving me nuts."

La Strada was one of the greatest international

successes in the history of the Italian cinema, winning more than 50 major film awards in nine countries. Producers all over the world deluged Fellini with scripts, but Fellini, as he still does, returned them unread. "I am, I hope, an original creative artist, and not a translator of other people's scripts to the screen," Fellini has said. "Anyway, the typical film script is trash, and I have no time to waste on trash. A writer can write for maybe fifty years, but a film director's creative life is, mysteriously, perhaps because success destroys him, much shorter. After fifteen years or so, a director is burned out and finished."

Having made *La Strada*, Fellini discovered that he was no longer an obscure Italian director but an international film celebrity. One advantage of this was that his financial problems—which still plagued him, for most of the profits from *La Strada* somehow had ended up in the bulging pockets of Dino De Laurentiis—appeared at last to be permanently over. His next film, however, *Il Bidone*, which Fellini made in 1955 with the American actor Broderick Crawford in the lead role, was both a critical and an artistic failure, as well as an enormous box-office dud.

Fellini was forced to spend more than a year raising enough money to shoot his next picture, *The Nights of Cabiria*, and he didn't get the picture before the cameras until the fall of 1956. Starring Miss Masina, *The Nights of Cabiria* was an episodic film dealing with a year or so in the life of a cheerfully woebegone prostitute in Rome. In the film, Fellini for the first time combined the poetic style of *La Strada* with the satiric style of *The White Sheik*, thus purging it of the sentimental aftertaste that had bothered some critics of *La Strada* and creating a new synthesized style that has marked all subsequent Fellini films—an almost Dickensian mixture of pathos, low comedy, irony, satire, melancholy and high lyricism.

The Nights of Cabiria was, of course, a triumph, praised throughout Europe as the greatest of Fellini's films, and once again the awards and the offers from producers rolled in. And once again, the money did *not* roll in, at least not into Fellini's bank account. About two thirds of the way through the filming of the picture, Fellini again ran out of money and thus once more trustingly



In the notorious orgiastic party scene of *LA DOLCE VITA*, Marcello Mastroianni disported himself with Rome's jet set. Fellini never made a lira on the film's huge success.

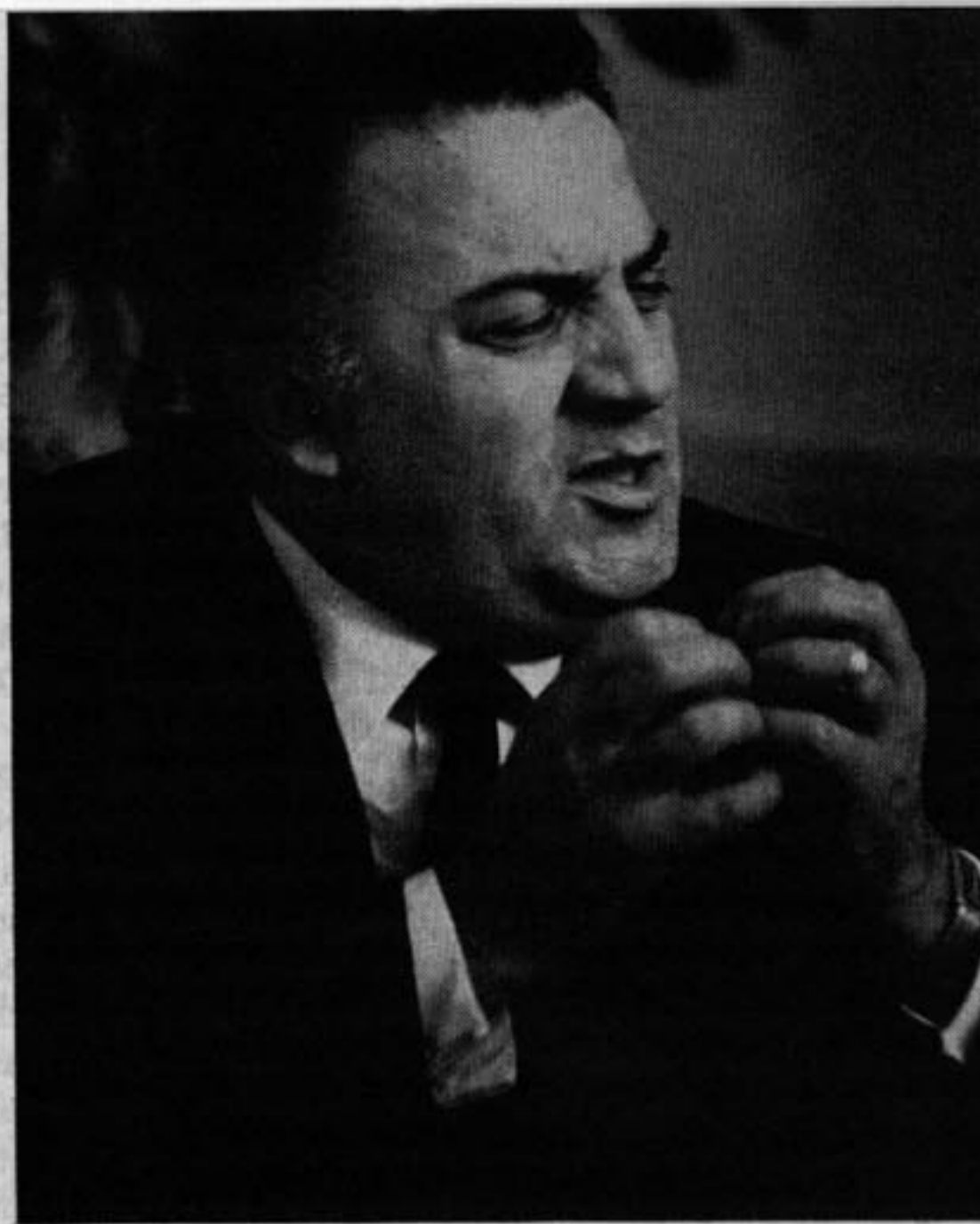
delivered himself into the fine Italian hands of Dino De Laurentiis, who charitably agreed to finance the rest of the picture if Fellini would sign a five-film contract and sign over the bulk of the profits of the picture. Fellini has never had any sense of money, being interested in it only as something frustratingly necessary for the making of movies, and, despite the objections of his wife, who is extremely hardheaded in business matters, he agreed to De Laurentiis's terms.

La Strada, the ill-fated *Il Bidone* and *The Nights of Cabiria* had all represented conscious attempts on Fellini's part to invent relevant modern myths on the subjects of love, loneliness and alienation. Fellini now determined to suspend myth making in order to create a film designed to *destroy* certain modern myths by which contemporary man lives, myths which, Fellini felt, caused men and women everywhere to lead bewildered lives of inhibition, frustration, guilt and unhappiness. For example, Fellini was and is concerned about what he terms "the myth of misunderstood religion," the mistaken belief, in Fellini's opinion, that through organized religions, like the Catholic Church, one can find happiness. "Religion demands of a man that he be morally perfect," Fellini has said, "which is impossible, and when a man fails in his frail attempts to be perfect, his religion then reacts on his spirits as a destructive force. The myth has filled him with regrets and guilt, it has bound his spirits, and he is no longer able to be free, to be, simply enough, happy."

The movie in which Fellini proposed to attack this and other myths (the myth of family, the myth of sex without love, the myth of money, the myth of fame) was *La Dolce Vita*. He envisioned *La Dolce Vita* in seven parts, the parts linked together by the wanderings through an Inferno-like modern Rome of a relatively innocent and free-spirited young journalist, Marcello, who is exposed in turn to each of the worst evils of modern society and is at last destroyed—left broken in spirit, miserable and corrupt, though, chillingly, not aware of what has happened. Getting the go-ahead from De Laurentiis, Fellini spent the next two years, from the early months of 1957 until the late spring of 1959, preparing to film *La Dolce Vita*—working on the script, searching for location sites for the film and casting. He personally cast nearly 2,000 people for the film, including all of the extras for such mass scenes as the sequence of the false miracle.

In the summer of 1958, after considering hundreds of actors, Fellini cast Marcello Mastroianni in the lead role of the journalist, and even changed the name of the character in the script from Moraldo to Marcello so that Mastroianni could more easily identify with the role, a trick Fellini often uses. At the time Mastroianni was 34 and had been a professional actor for a dozen years on the stage in Rome and in some 45 movies, none of which anybody had ever heard of. In handing the lead role in a film budgeted at almost two million dollars to an actor who was all but unknown, Fellini again clashed with his friend De Laurentiis, who wanted the American actor Paul Newman. Fellini flatly refused to consider Newman, and this and other wrangles led Fellini to walk out on De Laurentiis. Thus, *La Dolce Vita* was produced by Angelo Rizzoli, an aging Milanese publisher, industrialist, real-estate tycoon and movie producer who is one of the three or four wealthiest men in Italy. Though Fellini had had little trouble in getting Rizzoli to produce *La Dolce Vita*, there remained the matter of Fellini's five-film contract with De Laurentiis, an agreement which De Laurentiis refused to cancel for any sum less than a reported 100 million lire, or about \$150,000. Rizzoli agreed to buy Fellini his freedom, but the money was considered Fellini's full share of *La Dolce Vita*, and thus, though *La Dolce Vita* made millions of dollars, Fellini, typically, made nothing.

Rizzoli, however, went on to produce *8½* and



"A man will go back again and again to a museum to see an El Greco," Fellini sighs, "but see a film only once."

**'My next film
will not be in color;
it will not
have my wife in it.'**

Juliet of the Spirits, films in which it was agreed that Rizzoli and Fellini would share equally in the profits. Thus, from *8½*, which was a major box-office success, Fellini made a bundle of money, and today is a relatively wealthy man. Those who recognized Rizzoli in the character of the producer in *8½* know that he occasionally became a trifle nervous over Fellini's tendency to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars before having shot 10 feet of film. During the making of *Juliet of the Spirits*, this nervousness on Rizzoli's part led to a number of full-scale disagreements between Fellini and Rizzoli, and a few months ago Fellini officially broke off with Rizzoli and signed up once again—although a number of friends urged him not to—with none other than Dino De Laurentiis.

Having money hasn't in the least changed Fellini, although he now sports an extremely handsome and expensive vicuña coat, has recently built a modest seaside home at Fregene, on the Tyrrhenian Sea some 25 miles northwest of Rome, and is now able to indulge a life-long passion for expensive automobiles, often being seen these days tooling about Rome in a black Mercedes sedan. On such occasions, pedestrians who happen to recognize him amiably shout, "Ciao, ciao, il Poeta!" and Fellini cheerfully beams and waves back.

La Dolce Vita was, of course, an international blockbuster—one of the most talked about, argued about, praised and damned movies ever made, and it established Fellini as one of the three or four most famous film directors in the world. In February, 1960, when the film had its world premiere in Rome, the first-night audience booed, hissed and called for Fellini's neck, and when Fellini attended the theater in Milan, an elegantly dressed aristocrat accosted him outside, shouted, "You have dragged Italy through the mud!" and spat in Fellini's face. Though most critics agree that *La Dolce Vita* is one of the most moral films ever made, the Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano* denounced the film as "immoral," "obscene" and "disgusting," and demanded that Rizzoli and Fellini withdraw the film in order "to protect the public's morals." Naturally enough, when the

public heard that the film might possibly endanger its morals, owners of theaters showing it had to fight off the crowds trying to see it. The movie had a great box-office success everywhere in the world, especially in the United States.

Before making *La Dolce Vita*, Fellini had signed a contract with producer Carlo Ponti to make one of the four segments of a film called *Boccaccio '70*, and in the summer of 1961 Fellini proceeded to get this "distraction," as he himself termed it, out of the way. He wanted to go on to a full-length film, which he then envisioned as a sequel to *La Dolce Vita* in which the central character was to be the innocent teen-age girl, Paola. As Fellini saw it, the new film was to be a contrasting *paradiso* to the *inferno* of *La Dolce Vita*. By the time that he had hurriedly completed his segment of *Boccaccio '70*, Fellini was close to physical collapse, and he took his first vacation in seven years, traveling alone to the spa at Chianciano, where he planned, between sips of mineral water, to work on the script of the new picture. For the first time in his life, however, plagued by worries of "God, wife, women, money and taxes," as he recently put it, Fellini found himself unable to concentrate on his work. In short, he was psychologically blocked. His was one of the briefest blocks in the history of art, however, for after a few days of moping disconsolately about the spa, he began to develop in his mind the beginnings of a film about a blocked artist moping disconsolately about a spa, and he was off on the voyage of discovery that became *8½*.

"At the start I kept wondering, 'What shall we make the hero's occupation? Lawyer? Engineer? Doctor?'" Fellini said not long ago. "But they all seemed false; I didn't know these occupations well enough to make them true to the particular truth I was trying to tell. So at last I said, 'Let's make the hero a movie director, like me,' and everything instantly fell into place."

As Ian Dallas, an English journalist whom Fellini recruited to play the role of the magician in the film, has described *8½*, it is at the same time "a Portrait of the Artist as a Middle-Aged Man and a Portrait of the Middle-Aged Man as an Artist," an extraordinarily complex portrait, mixing dreams, fantasy, reality and memory in a manner that several observers have called Proustian, though Fellini has never read Proust. And other observers saw in *8½* equally impressive influences. Alberto Moravia, for example, thought he saw James Joyce and *Ulysses* lurking in the middle distance, but Fellini has never read Joyce, either. Another critic suggested in conversation with Fellini that *8½* was perhaps a parallel to the opening passages of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, in which Dante speaks of how, in the middle of life, one finds oneself lost in a dark wood and must search for the way out. "Yes, yes, I suppose . . . that is what it is about," Fellini told the critic. He has read Dante.

8½ was yet another triumph for Fellini, winning him the almost obligatory film-festival awards, and having, too, considerable critical and box-office success, although a number of reviewers frankly admitted that they were confused. "If you thought Federico Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* was a hard-to-fathom film . . . wait until you see *8½* . . ." wrote Bosley Crowther in *The New York Times*. "Here is a piece of entertainment that will make you really sit up straight and think. . ."

When he was in the midst of filming *8½*, the idea of making a kind of sequel ignited in Fellini's mind. As *8½* had dealt with a middle-aged man lost in a dark Dantean wood, so Fellini saw the new film, *Juliet of the Spirits*, as the story of a middle-aged woman lost in the same wood. Indeed, the idea for the film first came to him in the form of a vision of a lonely woman waiting in a

In Giulietta's nightmare, Sandra Milo becomes an erotic bride, taunting the goatlike Lou Gilbert, who is cast as Giulietta's dead grandfather, symbol of an early trauma.

villa for the return home of her husband on the night of their 20th wedding anniversary, a vision that is the opening sequence of *Juliet of the Spirits*.

Fellini and his three co-writers worked on the script through most of the spring, summer and fall of 1963, and Fellini then began casting, a job that took him until the summer of 1964, when he at last began filming. *Juliet of the Spirits* was before the cameras at Fregene (when he couldn't find a real seaside Fregene villa that looked like the one in his mind, he had one built from his own plans), where the Fellinis have their country home, and at studios in Rome from August, 1964, until January of this year, one of the longest and most problem-filled of Fellini's shooting schedules.

Last autumn, when he was in New York for several days for the American premiere of *Juliet of the Spirits* (a visit during which he was very much lionized, being the guest of honor, for instance, at a private dinner party given by Jacqueline Kennedy), Fellini recalled his problems with the movie. "It was my most difficult film," he remarked, shaking his head. "My wife is an aggressive, strong-minded woman, not a wistful, pastel figure, as some writers have pictured her, and I am strong-minded, too, so we had our clashes. Color was an enormous problem, we never quite got it the way I wanted it in the final Technicolor prints; and, too, the film is filled with fleeting fragments of fantasy, hallucination and memory, scenes that, though they may last only seconds on the screen, took hours and even days to shoot—some five-second scenes in *Juliet* took me as long to shoot as two-minute scenes in, say, *Cabiria*."

In New York, Fellini denied that *Juliet of the*

Spirits was autobiographical, but it is perhaps significant to note that he mentioned that his wife, like the Giulietta in the film, had visions when she was a child, is convinced that she herself possesses the powers of a medium and believes in ghosts. Fellini, too, believes in ghosts, as well as in magic, astrology, tarot cards and all kinds of mysticism and superstition, and, when he is shooting a film, he often goes to fortune-tellers, soothsayers and mediums for guidance, including Genius, the medium who plays himself in *Juliet of the Spirits*. In fact, just before Fellini began filming *Juliet of the Spirits*, he held a séance in his spacious Rome apartment to research the séance scene in the picture, and during it he became convinced that the ghost of his late father appeared and spoke to him.

All in all, in a milder than usual post-film depression, Fellini is delighted with the favorable critical reception received so far in Milan, Rome, Paris, London and New York by *Juliet of the Spirits*, which he concedes is his most complicated film to date. "It is a fairy tale for adults," says Fellini. "The film is the one art form with which the artist can explore the inner landscape of the human being—his thoughts, memories, fantasies, dreams flickering through the mind. This is what I have attempted to put on the screen in *8½* and *Juliet of the Spirits*, and this is what I shall try to do again in my next film. I can say little about my next film. It is right now too vague an idea in my mind. I can say this, though—it will *not* be in color and it will *not* have my wife in it."

Though Fellini has often told interviewers that he doesn't care what audiences think about his films, he admitted to an American friend while

driving in a limousine to Kennedy International Airport, on his way back to Rome after his New York visit, that he does indeed care very much. And he is annoyed by audiences who miss the point of his films because they are not willing to take movies seriously. "The producers, the distributors and the movie-theater owners have always sold films as though they were products to be consumed and forgotten, like bottles of soda water," said Fellini, speaking alternately in Italian and in his more than fluent English. "And so film audiences think of movies this way. A man who will read, say, *War and Peace* two or three times, who will listen to the Beethoven quartets hundreds of times, and who will go back again and again to a museum to look at an El Greco that has captured his interest, will see a film only once—it is the empty bottle of soda he has already drunk. For a film maker, this is very discouraging."

In a rainy New York dusk, the limousine pulled up to the Alitalia terminal, and, as Fellini and his American friend shook hands good-bye, the friend asked him if he planned to take a vacation when he got back to Rome. "Making a movie is my vacation; all the rest, the traveling about to premieres, the interviews, the social life, the endless arguments with producers who don't understand me, is the work," said Fellini, adding that he planned to sleep on the plane and then to plunge right into the script of his next picture the moment he arrived in Rome. "And when I am asleep," said Fellini, smiling as he turned to stride off toward the plane that would take him back to his native Italy and his next cinematic voyage of discovery. "I dream of my films." □

