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Levitt-Pickman Film Corporation

PRESENTS

FEDERICO FELLINI

THE CLOWNS

Federico Fellini on "The Clowns"

The Annunciation Made to Federico

Forced to reflect, I would say that clowns — those aberrant figures, those ragged, bungling, drunken grotesques — in their complete irrationality, in their violence and abnormal whims, were an apparition of my childhood, a prophecy, the anticipation of a vocation, the annunciation made to Federico.

The circus is not only a spectacle: it is a life experience. It is a way of traveling into one's own life. Coincidences, obviously, do exist. Otherwise, how does one explain the fact that a child, upon being brought to church — instead of being seized, as I was, by a sensation of coldness — can feel a kind of intoxication and become a priest?

A slaughterhouse atmosphere runs through the circus. There are madnesses and terrifying experiences. The threat of death and the thrill of such spectacles are linked, certainly, to the experiences of the ancient Circus Maximus: there is blood in the midst of the harvest. And yet, precisely because as a child I felt myself directly *inside* the spectacle, I could bear my emotion by feeling a kind of fear different from that of a mere spectator.

Surely everything has already been said about the circus: it is an overblown scaffolding, a mildewed literary topic. Nevertheless, in the end the circus manifests itself again like a perfect nucleus: an authentic atmosphere which cannot be filed away to gather dust, because its way of living, of imagining, embodies within it some lasting myths — adventure, travel, risk, threat, speeding, coming to the light.

Perhaps the more mortifying aspect, however, is that people come to see you, obliging you to exhibit yourself, to subject yourself to a monstrous examination by others who have the right to say when they come: "Here I am. Make me laugh. Thrill me. Make me cry."

I think that the circus performance, despite certain obvious creakings with regard to the contemporary world, should be recovered. The circus has not become outdated, even though it is mainly melodrama and revue.

Obviously, there is a disproportion between the effort of being carried behind thirty elephants from Milan to Catania and the theatrical effect that results. The circus, in fact, still bases part of its miracle on its exotic aspect

(the African and Indian animals) and on danger, at a time when our artful society is able each day to see any spectacle of nature, or take part in lunar voyages, by way of film and television.

And yet, despite this excessive attempt to amaze, the part that impressed us during childhood (the tent, the ring, the lights, the band) could remain as the physical environment for expressing our ideas and our feelings.

In sum, the circus is congenial to me. A traumatizing, total adhesion to that noise, that music, those monstrous apparitions, those threats of death, was immediately manifest in me. This show — based on miracle, fantasy, jest, nonsense, fable, the lack of coldly intellectual meanings — is precisely the kind of show that pleases me.

Furthermore, the fact that I have projected onto the circus and the clown a shadow of death is proof of their vitality inside me. When one says, "God is dead," one is only reasserting the need for God in a more virginal, uncorrupted way.

The White Clown and the Auguste

When I say "the clown," I am thinking of Auguste. There are, however, two figures: Pierrot, or the white

clown, and Auguste. The former is elegance, grace, harmony, intelligence, lucidity, which are moralistically presented as idealizations. Pierrot thus becomes Mother, Father, Teacher, Artist, Lover, *that which ought to be*.

Auguste, who would experience the fascination of these perfections were they not displayed with so much severity, is revolted. He sees that the sequins are shining brightly, but the arrogance with which they are displayed makes them unattainable. Auguste rebels against such perfection, gets drunk and rolls on the ground. His spirit is a perpetual challenge.

The white clown (Pierrot) and Auguste are the teacher and the child, the mother and the mischievous son, the angel with the flaming sword and the sinner.

In short, these are man's two psychological attitudes: his thrust toward the lofty, and his push toward the base.

The film ends with the two figures meeting and going off together. Why does such a situation move one so much? Because the two figures embody a myth that is basic to each of us: the reconciliation of opposites, the singleness of being.

Another Version of the Couplet

At this point, one could also cite the famous Chinese antithesis, between *yin* and *yang*, between hot and cold, between masculine and feminine; one could speak of Hegel and the dialectic; and one could add that, perhaps, the Augustes are a sub-proletarian image, those capable of revolt but not of revolution.

The white clown must be bad: that is a rule of the game. The white clown is someone who slaps.

The Auguste: "I am thirsty."

The white clown: "Do you have any money?"

The Auguste: "No."

The white clown: "Then you are not thirsty."

Another tendency of the white clown is his exploitation of the Auguste, not only as the butt of the joke but as a working man. The white clown is a bourgeois, and that is why he tends to appear dressed in a style calculated to amaze: in appearance, he is absolutely marvelous, rich, powerful. His face is white, spectral; it carries a sneer on its haughty eyebrows; his mouth is drawn with a single hard, unpleasant, repellent, cold line. White

clowns have always competed among themselves to see who has the showiest costume (the costume war). The most famous was Theodore, who had a costume for each day of the year.

The Auguste, on the contrary, is fixed into a single character (the tramp, the child, the ragamuffin) that does not change.

The middle-class family is an assembly of white clowns, in which the child is put in the position of the Auguste. The mother says, "Don't do this, don't do that." When she calls in the neighbors and asks the child to recite a poem ("Show these nice people how you can . . ."), she makes herself part of a typical circus situation.

The White Clown-Auguste Game

The world is peopled with clowns. During my research in Paris for this film, I imagined a sequence (never shot) in which I saw clowns everywhere in the street: ridiculous old ladies with absurd little hats, women with plastic sacks on their heads to protect them from the rain, long-hairs with torn cloaks, businessmen with bowler hats and a bishop with the face of an embalmed man.

If I imagine being a clown myself, I think of being an Auguste. But a white clown, too. Finally, perhaps I am the director of the circus. The doctor of the lunatics become a lunatic himself!

Let us continue by imagining others in these two roles. Pasolini is a white clown of the graceful and pedantic variety. Antonioni is one of the sad, taciturn, mute Augustes. Picasso? A triumphant Auguste, insolent, without complexes, knowing how to do everything: in the end, it is he who gets the upper hand with the white clown. Einstein: an enchanted, dreamy Auguste, who never speaks but at the last moment innocently draws out of his pocket the solution to the riddle propounded by the wily white clown. Visconti: a white clown of great authority, his pompous costume already giving orders. Hitler: a white clown. Mussolini: an Auguste. Freud: a white clown. Jung: an Auguste.

This game is so real that, if you have a white clown in front of you, you are forced to act like an Auguste, and vice versa. The production manager of my film was a white clown, and as a result all of us became Augustes.



Have I Succeeded?

The film is finished, but of course a certain doubt remains. Is my amazement, that sense of fear, of something unknown and at the same time familiar that I experienced the first time I saw the clown Pierino, in my film? And the smell of the sawdust, of the wild animals, the mysterious twilight up there under the dome, the piercing music, that air of sport and execution, of festivity and butchery, of grace and madness, which are the circus, are they in my film?

Fellini entered the cinema in 1942 as a collaborator on the scripts for some half-dozen comedies, then worked on the scripts for *Open City* and *Paisan*, also serving as assistant director to Roberto Rossellini on these two films and on the later "The Miracle" with Anna Magnani (shown in the U.S. in 1950 as one of the three episodes in *The Ways of Love*). Finally, in 1950 he was given the chance to direct (under the technical guidance of an old collaborator, Alberto Lattuada), thus beginning what has been one of the most distinguished careers in the history of the medium.

1950—*Luci del Varieta'*—with Alberto Lattuada (U.S. release in 1965 as *Variety Lights*)
 1952—*Lo Sceicco Bianco* (U.S. release in 1956 as *The White Shiek*)
 1953—*I Vitelloni* (U.S. release in 1956)
 1954—*Amore in Citta'*: "Agenzia Matrimoniale" episode (U.S. release in 1955 as *Love in the City: "Love Cheerfully Arranged"*)
 1954—*La Strada* (U.S. release in 1956)
 1955—*Il Bidone* (U.S. release in 1964)
 1957—*Le Notti di Cabiria* (U.S. titles: *Cabiria* or *The Nights of Cabiria*)
 1960—*La Dolce Vita* (U.S. release in 1961)
 1962—*Boccaccio '70*: "Le Tentazioni del Dottore Antonio" (Upon U.S. release, the episode was known as "The Temptation of Dr. Antonio")
 1963—*Otto e Mezzo* (U.S. title: *8½*)
 1965—*Giulietta Degli Spiriti* (U.S. title: *Juliet of the Spirits*)
 1968—*Histoires Extraordinaires*: "Il Ne Faut Pas Parier Sa Tete avec le Diable" episode (U.S. release in 1969 as *Spirits of the Dead: "Never Bet the Devil Your Head"* or "Toby Dammit")
 1969—*Satyricon* (U.S. release in 1970 as *Fellini Satyricon*)
 1970—*I Clowns* (U.S. release in 1971 as *The Clowns*)

Director	FEDERICO FELLINI
Producers	ELIO SCARDAMAGLIA
	UGO GUERRA
Screenplay	FEDERICO FELLINI
	BERNARDINO ZAPPONI
Music	NINO ROTA
Director of Photography	DARIO DI PALMA
Costumist	DANILO DONATI
Editor	RUGGERO MASTROIANNI
Assistant Director	MAURIZIO MEIN
Production Manager	LAMBERTO PIPPIA
Production Secretary	NORMA GIACCHERO
Assistant to the Director	LILIANA BETTI
Set Decorator	RENZO GRONCHI
Camera Operator	BLASCO GIURATO
Make-up	RINO CARBONI (Orlane)
Hairdresser	PAOLO FRANCESCHI
Assistant to the Editor	ADRIANA OLASIO
Music Conductor	CARLO SAVINA
Mixing	ALBERTO BARTOLOMEI
Synchronization	C. D. S.
Studio	Cinecitta' S.p.a.

The Clowns

BILLI	14 COLOMBAIONI	FUMAGALLI
SCOTTI	MERLI	ZERBINATI
FANFULLA	I MARTANA	JANIGRO
RIZZO	MAGGIO	MAUNSELL
PISTONI	SBARRA	PEVERELLO
FURIA	CARINI	SORRENTINO
REDER	TERZO	VALDEMARO
VALENTINI	VINGELLI	BEVILACQUA

The Troupe

MAYA MORIN	ALVARO VITALI
LINA ALBERTI	GASPARINO

The French Clowns

ALEX	PERE LORiot	MAIS
BARIO	LUDO	NINO

and with

PIERRE ETAIX	ANNIE FRATELLINI
GUSTAV FRATELLINI	BAPTISTE
TRISTAN REMY	
LIANA, RINALDO, NANDO, ORFEI	

The Animal Trainer . . . FRANCO MIGLIORINI

and

ANITA EKBERG

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