



The Noblest Roman of Them All

ITALY'S neo-realist directors have concentrated with such avidity on the problems of Roman prostitutes that I had begun to think that if I never saw another movie of this kind it would be a giant step toward nirvana. I suppose I still feel that way, but with one important exception—Federico Fellini's "*Cabiria*" (Lopert). For the youthful director of "*La Strada*" and his talented wife, Giulietta Masina, have transformed a subject that is so often merely sordid into a film that glows with the affirmation of life. Like "*La Strada*," their "*Cabiria*" is deeply moving, reality shaped with an artistry rarely found in films today. But it moves with such quick humor and it ends on a note of such spiritual exaltation that one loses all sense of the fact that this is a picture about pimps, prostitutes, and dope pushers. It emerges rather as a film of hope, regeneration, love, and self-respect.

Fellini, a tall, broad-shouldered, massive man with large, expressive eyes and sensitive hands, spoke not long ago of the origins of his "*Cabiria*." "Giulietta played the character in my very first film, '*The White Sheik*,'" he said. "It was only a brief scene in which a prostitute comforts a young husband who has lost his wife, but the character stayed with me. I thought that more could be done with her, even though I didn't know what. And then, while I was shooting a sequence on location for '*Il Bidone*,' suddenly there she was in the flesh—an independent creature with a hard cover of anger for her terrible lonely pride. We had put down rails for a traveling shot right up to the door of her little shack. She came out furious and ordered us to take them away. Nevertheless, at the lunch break I carried one of our baskets of food to her. When she wouldn't open the door, I left it on the steps. Two hours later she crept out and carried it off to the woods to eat. After that she began to come closer and closer to us, like a little animal, and finally we could talk. This girl, Wanda, ultimately served as a sort of technical advisor on '*Cabiria*.'"

What fascinated Fellini about the girl was her obvious desire and her equally obvious inability to make contact with others. As this theme grew in his mind, he began to study the prostitutes of Rome who gathered



Federico Fellini—"Italy's greatest."

at night outside the Baths of Caracalla or walked the Via Veneto, not noting down Kinsey-fashion the cold data of their profession but rather discovering in personal terms their life, their problems, their men. He found most of them pathetically hungry for a real human relationship. From this came the springboard situation for his film. *Cabiria*, like most prostitutes, has a young man whom she works for, supports, and loves. As the film opens, the two of them race hand in hand across an open field to the river's edge. They embrace for an idyllic moment and then, snatching her purse, he brutally pushes her into the water. Each subsequent episode reveals another facet of her advance or retreat from the world about her—the other streetwalkers, the drunken actor who finds her momentarily amusing, her church, and finally the middle-aged government worker with whom, slowly, diffidently, she falls in love again.

All of this Fellini has touched with the special cinematic poetry that made "*La Strada*" so extraordinary. There is, for example, a sequence shot in a third-rate vaudeville theatre. A tired magician offers to hypnotize volunteers from the audience. *Cabiria* is pushed onto the stage and there, in the beam of the spotlight, a wreath of artificial flowers on her head, she is transported back to her girlhood. The hard mask of the prostitute melts

away; with lovely innocence she picks imaginary flowers for an imaginary first love—while bored stagehands and frowzy chorines look on from the wings. And then the spell seems to sweep through the theatre, catching up not only the audience but even the hypnotist as well. It is a scene of magnificent daring flawlessly executed.

At another point, *Cabiria* and her friends—including a crippled dope peddler—visit a church outside Rome where miraculous cures are effected. The voices of children chant a hymn as the girls make their way through the frenzied throngs in search of their own miracle, a change in their way of life. Here Fellini achieves an incredible intensity through close-ups alone, concentrating his camera alternately on the tremulous, trusting face of *Cabiria* and on the panicking, guilt-ridden cripple as each presses on toward the altar. Afterwards, outside, the cripple lies on the ground resigned to his fate; but *Cabiria*, convinced that no miracle has taken place, vents her disappointment on a passing band of pilgrims. As the pilgrims move into the distance, however, their song of faith gradually blots out both the girl's invective and the cheap accordion music of her friends.

IT IS at such moments—and there are many, many more in this film—that one becomes especially aware of Fellini's mastery of his medium. He is one of the few directors who is not afraid to rely on imagery, to let his camera speak for him. A writer himself (he did short stories and radio plays before turning to motion pictures), he knows the value of the spoken word. "But," he said during his recent sojourn in New York, "when I began working with Rossellini I began to see how much more expressive the visuals can be. Now I try not to have too much dialogue. Sometimes I do a scene with no written lines at all. 'Just say what you feel,' I tell my actors, and often it is better than any dialogue. If not, of course, I can always dub later." Fellini likes to improvise his shots, coming to each new scene with a clear idea of what it must include but trusting to the location, his characters, and his own inspiration for the final shaping of the actual "take." A pivotal shot in "*Cabiria*," for example, shows the government worker in Rome's Terminal Station with a toothpick in his mouth. The bit of wood becomes a clue to his entire personality—yet the idea for it came to Fellini only a moment or two before the cameras started to turn.

Fellini has written his own scripts

for each of the five pictures that he has directed to date, often spending as much as a year on this phase of the preparation. "Which is not nearly as long," he admitted with a smile, "as I must then spend to find a producer who will back them. But I do not see how your American directors can take a script that has been written generally with some specific star in mind and hope to make of it something personal. I have been invited to direct in America—and I hope that some day I shall—but I cannot direct just any script. In all my films I try to search out the inner reality of something I know. I cannot work otherwise." He draws a sharp distinction between this "inner reality," which is a personal and artistic expression of his own vision, and the non-committal objectivity of the classical neo-realists in Italy.

SHOOTING time on a Fellini film is generally under three months, the least time-consuming element in his pictures. "After the shooting," he says, "then comes the real work—the editing. Here is where you get the breath into a film. I run the scenes over and over again—one hundred, maybe two hundred times. I hear them with their natural sound to capture again the excitement that was on the set when the scene was shot. I try to keep what sounds I can—a train passing by, a crowd yelling, the traffic noises. Often even these must be recreated, however, because the generators for the cameras and the lights are too loud. I also try to see how much I can do without sound, as in the scene where Giulietta simply lights a cigarette and strolls outside her house to where the children are playing. You learn to alternate sound with silence, silence with sound, and then finally it all comes alive. I feel that every director must cut his own picture."

Although Fellini speaks with a lively intelligence of the technical aspects of his craft, this is hardly the true index to his greatness. Lesser men have spoken as well. But there are things that happen in his pictures that transcend mere technique—the stain of a tear that recalls the paintings of medieval Madonnas, the shade of a voice calling "Buona Sera" to welcome Cabiria back to life at the ending. These sounds and sights created out of shadows touch the deepest chords of our sensibilities. They are neither tricks nor effects, but the product of that subtle interplay of technique and emotion which we call art. At thirty-six, Federico Fellini is without question Italy's greatest film artist today.

—ARTHUR KNIGHT.

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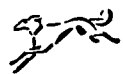
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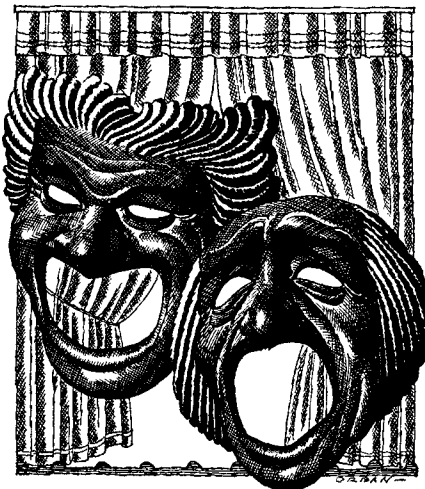
SINCE its order for ten outsized Lockheed Constellations began coming through a few months ago, Air France has been taking delivery in a series of nonstop flights which originate at Burbank, California, and end in Paris without a pause for refueling. The time required for delivery service has been running about sixteen or seventeen hours, or somewhat less than it takes for a lady who orders a hat at Saks to have it delivered to her home in Manhattan.

As fall came Air France decided to try a similar flight with one of these new Constellation 1649-As, a model which it calls the Super Starliner. The airplane, which has a maximum range of 7,000 miles at 10,000 feet and a maximum cruising speed of 342 mph, was dispatched out of New York on a lovely autumn day. Headed eastward, it came to earth fourteen-and-a-half hours later in Athens in what was generally adjudged to be the longest passenger flight on record. If it had been allowed to continue around the globe, it could have performed the circumnavigation in four easy hops.

While it is difficult for me to believe that seventeen years have passed since the first Constellation appeared, it is also staggering to contemplate that the new airplane is twice as heavy as the original. It is also some ten tons heavier than the Super-G Constellation which, it seems to me, was the last word only a few months ago.

While Air France will not fly regular direct nonstop service to Greece, it is sending this type airplane on one-plane service to Rome with a stop in Paris. For these excursions the huge tube is divided into a series of compartments with reclining chairs and footrests that spring forward at the touch of a button located in the fore and aft cabins, sleeping compartments that make up into sitting rooms amidships, and a sort of flying club-car and a galley separating the compartments and the rear reclining-seat compartment.

Stewards were about the aisles thumping large clods of caviar on the china, on our Odyssey to Athens, and the first two meals were studded with many courses and several wines. By breakfast time all that was left was rolls and coffee, there being not enough galley space to hold three



hot meals. Planes without our gas capacity recharged their kitchens when they refueled their tanks.

The circumstance of the flight to Greece and the hours that it took gave Air France an opportunity to describe at some length its trademark, which is a winged steed that is horse in front and fish behind and which is called a hippocampus. Now a true unwinged hippocampus is sometimes represented drawing the chariots of Poseidon, alias Neptune. Pegasus, the winged horse, was born of Poseidon and Medusa. The idea of crossing him with a hippocampus was born of an Air France insignia-maker in 1932.

Thus oriented to the ways of mythology, we were shortly cruising about the Acropolis, the Parthenon atop it standing strong and severe in the hot autumn sun. Although Athens is, I suppose, expected to be ageless, there were at least two new things that had been added since I had last been here two-and-a-half years ago. For one thing, there was the Stoa of Attalus, and for another there was the fever about Cyprus, a matter concerning which the government press people who accompanied our party repeatedly brought to our attention, like a dissonant note constantly replayed. The venerable Grande Bretagne Hotel, long the seat of Athenian social life, had, in a fit of anglophobic pique, been renamed the Petit Palais. Nonetheless, everybody went on calling it by its old familiar handle, the "G.B.," except for officialdom, which referred to it frostily as the Petit Palais. Abbreviation of the new name could only invite disaster.

There was considerable controversy

afoot too about the Stoa, an early Greek shopping center in the Agora of ancient Athens. From fragments found among the ruins of the Agora, American archeologists had been able to rebuild it, pretty much, it is thought, the way it was in the days of Greek glory. To classicists living in the shadow of the true ruins, reconstruction in the Williamsburg style is not considered scientific. Indeed, to some, it is nearly heretical. Nonetheless, the Stoa of Attalus as reconstructed by American money is an imposing edifice, the long row of chalk-white columns casting striped shadows across the marble floor of the covered walk where philosophers, politicians, and shoppers took refuge in the salad days from rain and sun. In the rear, where the shops were strung out in the manner of a one-sided *galleria*, the Americans have provided a museum of true relics that range back to Neolithic figurines, pottery which a guide described as a sample of the "ripe geometric style" of 750 B.C., and a *kleroterion*, a Greek voting machine. Outside, wild fragrant bushes that grow in Attica are being planted among the undisturbed ruins of the Agora and the path that led from the Agora to the Acropolis will be restored.

THANKFULLY, there was no controversy over Delphi, that fountain-head of wisdom and religion to which we made the long five-hour pilgrimage one day. Here, according to tradition, there was a sanctuary devoted to the Goddess of Earth whose rumblings frequently shook the environs of Delphi and the coast beyond. Later, up from Crete came Apollo disguised as a dolphin. He landed on the Corinthian Gulf and inhabited the Delphi ravine in summer. Temples were built in his honor. Inside sat a priestess chewing the slightly poisonous leaves of laurel and inhaling the smoke of burning herbs. Introduced into a trance, she recited answers to questions put to her by many pilgrims. These in turn were translated by priests, often in ambiguous terms which preserved the batting average.

Four temples were built for Apollo at Delphi, the greatest an edifice costing 3,000 talents, a sum which has been estimated at \$750,000. International contributions from everyone from the Egyptian Pharaoh to Croesus, who was rich as a Texan, met the bill. By the sixth century B.C. gifts were pouring in from city states, many of whom built treasuries at Delphi to house the offerings. It was this wealth that later led to the sack of Delphi by foreign invaders.

What is left today is a hillside of ruins stretching up the side of the