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Author(s): Maurizio Corbella

Reviewed work(s):

Source: *Music and the Moving Image*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (Fall 2011), pp. 14-30

Published by: [University of Illinois Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/musimoviimag.4.3.0014>

Accessed: 17/12/2011 07:59

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## Notes for a Dramaturgy of Sound in Fellini's Cinema: The Electroacoustic Sound Library of the 1960s

Maurizio Corbella

### Prologue: "Such stuff as dreams are made on"

It is not particularly unusual to appeal to a dream metaphor when analyzing Federico Fellini's pictures. After all, it is well known that dreams for Fellini did not work merely as metaphors for his film forms. They were rather a constant reference for his creative method. His habit every morning of drawing sketches of his dreams and nightmares,<sup>1</sup> his need to invent them in case he did not dream,<sup>2</sup> his extensive psychoanalytic sessions, his controlled experience with LSD, the séances he held with his wife and family friends: all these elements were evidence of his very committed research—some might say, obsession—aimed at the poetic *transcodification* of his explosive imagination into art.

Nonetheless, as *transcoded* dreams, Fellini's pictures remain artificial constructions, within which, contrary to dreams, every element is material. One of the reasons for our fascination with Fellini's pictures lies in their exposed craftsmanship. Fellini's awareness of the material constituents of his films leads him to fluctuate between dissimulating and revealing the elements of their construction (set, casting, makeup, scenography). It is as if, through such a fluctuation, he wants to represent his struggle between reality and fiction, reverie and present, identity and multiplicity.

When attempting to recollect the precise mood of a dream, it is difficult to determine which elements are marginal and which are central. Similarly, Fellini's movies, especially the feature-length ones of the 1960s (*La dolce vita*, 1960; *8½*, 1963, *Juliet of the Spirits*, 1965; and *Satyricon*, 1969) can be approached from several perspectives, each of which puts the elements of the construction under a different hierarchy.

In this essay, I focus on *electroacoustic sound*, an element traditionally regarded as minor, which nevertheless assumes a remarkable role in the setup of Fellini's artificial dreams. A good reason to investigate it arises when one considers a basic statement of fact: Fellini's use of electroacoustic sound resources is limited to only one important period in his career—the 1960s. It follows a growing trend that started with *La dolce vita*, reached its pinnacle with *Juliet of the Spirits*, and literally exploded with *Satyricon*, the most experimental of all his movies. After such an explosion, what is surprising thereafter is the sudden complete disappearance of the electronics in favor of a substantially simplified sound component in his movies.

To avoid terminological ambiguity, it may be helpful to clarify what I mean by electroacoustic sound. It is well known that all sound elements in the cinema—music, sound effects, even voice—are the result of a technological mediation, specifically an electroacoustic process. Yet, when dealing with narrative cinema, we have the widespread habit of privileging the narrative functions of sound in order to get directly to the referential domain. This generally bypasses the effects that the electroacoustic process conveys in any reproduced sound event. For instance, whenever we see a gun shooting in an action movie, we are not likely to question that the synchronized sound we hear is actually a gunshot, even if we have been informed that no guns were actually used to produce it. Similarly, it is common in Italy to talk about Al Pacino's voice, even if it is well known that in the dubbed editions usually distributed in Italy that voice is actually Giancarlo Giannini's. It is not for me to stigmatize any of these conventions. I prefer to consider them the result of Hollywood's model of audiovisual representation that historically overwhelmed and influenced others. According to this model, reproduced sound, just like filmic image, "became a relatively transparent signifier of a describable event, rather than an 'event' in and of itself."<sup>3</sup>

In other words, technological mediation tends to be transparent as long as it does not openly call into question the accepted model of signification. By contrast, it can be enhanced when it is particularly evident in the nature of a sound (i.e., synthetic or concrete sounds). As a result, its narrative effect will be that of extending Hollywood's realism toward uncanny worlds, like those of science fiction, or toward narrative topics, like mental deviance or psychic alterations. Yet, as James Lastra accurately illustrates in *Sound Technology and the American Cinema*, "even while appearing to fulfill a particular function (such as providing intelligible, narratively important dialogue), sound may simultaneously be performing other, nonnarrative or even nonrepresentational ones."<sup>4</sup>

It is sufficient to break the synchronization rule only slightly to get a sound to perform just like an event in itself, to polarize a whole series of latent meanings that can be related to images in other than mimetic ways. One of the most important features of Fellini's cinema since the 1960s is precisely its ability to take advantage of this awareness to realize its extraordinary underlying representational power. Fellini used the breaking of the synchronization rule in order to reconfigure the cinema as a new sensorial experience that would suit his dreamlike approach. As a result, asynchronous dubbing of actors, as well as surreal soundscapes, assume a binding role in his dramaturgy.

Synthetic and electronically manipulated sounds have a submerged history in the cinema that dates back to the 1920s, with the introduction of optical, drawn sound,<sup>5</sup> and had a golden age during the second half of the 1950s, with *Forbidden Planet* as a milestone.<sup>6</sup> These manipulated sounds perform functions that are not easily classifiable within the traditional grid of narrative sound cinema. They are located in a hybrid zone between the *musical* and the *referential* domains. They are able to work as musical elements with their melodic, rhythmic, timbral structure, while simultaneously establishing unusual synesthetic relationships with visual elements, replacing traditional mimetic sound effects. The 1960s was an historical period characterized by the development of electroacoustic research by experimental avant-garde and pop musicians. At the same time there was a "loosening" of the classic paradigm of cinematic narration.<sup>7</sup> The cinema started to acknowledge the extraordinary resources of synthesis and tape manipulation. As a result, it enriched, and sometimes redefined, its narrative strategies.<sup>8</sup> It should not be surprising, therefore, that Fellini, as well as other filmmakers—for instance, Hitchcock in *The Birds* (1963), Godard in *Alphaville* (1965), and Antonioni in *The Red Desert* (1964)—were fascinated by electroacoustic sound and started to experiment with it. What is most interesting is to investigate the peculiarities of Fellini's use of such devices, in order to point out how they were assimilated into his aesthetic of that time.

This essay attempts to provide answers to two different sets of questions: (1) Are there any relevant features in the electroacoustic sound elements used by Fellini? (2) What is their role within the filmmaker's dramaturgy and aesthetic, or, to put it in other words, how can analysis of them contribute to a better formulation of Fellini's aesthetic? First I focus on the sound of wind, which I consider as a sort of primary color in Fellini's dramaturgy of sound. Then I demonstrate how electroacoustic sounds are organized into a sort of library. Finally, in the last three paragraphs, I follow a chronological path leading from *La dolce vita* (1960) to *Juliet of the Spirits* (1965), through which I try to sort out how electroacoustic sound contributes to establish the articulated dramaturgical plans of Fellini's pictures.

I will exclude *Satyricon* (1969). It would deserve a specifically dedicated work all by itself, given the profound differences that characterize the use of electroacoustic sound resources in it compared with that in earlier films. The main difference is that *Satyricon's* electroacoustic sound is made up of preexisting music by contemporary experimental composers (namely, İlhan Mimaroglu, Tod Dockstader, Andrew Rudin, and Henri Pousseur), whereas Fellini's previous films are dominated by isolated electroacoustic sound "objects." For this reason, *Satyricon* can be read as a temporary digression in Fellini's general conception of sound, or rather as the radicalization of an aesthetic that has reached its extreme limits.

### The Wind as a Key Element in Fellini's Dramaturgy

Fellini tended not to use sound that was recorded live for backgrounds and dialogues. This is just partly due to the technological limits of the Italian cinema of that period. (Italian producers usually budgeted very little money for the sound component of their pictures, so the films lacked technological development for sound postproduction.) By comparison with other directors, Fellini refused to use live sound even when he could afford it. All elements of the soundtrack were decided in postproduction, following a logic that not only was less strict than contemporary Hollywood's, but at times contradicted it explicitly. Therefore, in the case of authors with a specific sensibility or peculiarity regarding the matter of sound, one should read each sound choice through the lens of the filmmaker's dramaturgical methodology and vision, which might not respond to generally shared praxis or might even question it.

Sound elements that normally would not be of interest in the work of other directors turn out to be fundamental in Fellini's films, to such an extent that they properly constitute an aesthetic cipher.<sup>9</sup> Among them, *wind sound* is particularly relevant to Fellini's peculiar interpretation of neorealism. In each one of his films of the 1950s, from *The White Sheik* (1951) to *The Nights of Cabiria* (1958), the weak plot pivoted on one or more erratic digressions that represented the interpretative keys for the pictures, as long as they turned the realistic frame of the plot into the shape of dream and memory. Thanks to such digressions, the main characters could experience the possibility of being different from the way they actually were.

As far as sound is concerned, the naturalistic soundscape succeeded in transcending the "here" and the "now" of the plot thanks mainly to a unique sound element: wind. It was perhaps the only true sound constant in all of his movies, significantly surviving even after the experiments of the 1960s. The wind hiss peeps out in every film, even becoming overwhelming in extreme cases like *Casanova* (1976).

From the beginning of Fellini's career, wind is weighted with the value of indefiniteness typical of the poetic transfiguration of memory. Together with other elements of the visual environment, the beach and the sea among them, the wind helps to establish the typical Fellinian landscape of the mind where the "shifts of dimensions" materialize. There are many examples: the sea tempest on the photostory set of *The White Sheik*, the storm at the beginning of *I vitelloni* (1953), the beach sequence at the end of *La dolce vita*, the end of *8½*, the first dream in *Juliet of the Spirits*, and so on and so forth until the end of *Satyricon* and the beginning of *Amarcord* (1973). Full of all sorts of possible psychoanalytic connotations, and also of Joyce's symbolism (how can one not recall Stephen Dedalus's walk on Dublin's beach in the third chapter of *Ulysses*?), the Fellinian beach is a "border" landscape, as real as a memory of his childhood in Rimini could be, and at the same time as imaginary as an absence rising to the surface. It is a place of possibility, of change and fear, but also one of return to an authentic and essential condition. The wind, then, is the sonic and iconic expression of the never-ending whirl of elements underlying Fellini's world, whose ephemeral and temporary manifestations are his films.

Yet, after *La dolce vita*, a change can be remarked. *La dolce vita* stands out as the moment of transition in Fellini's career. It has a

Film	Sequence	Sound	Sonogram
<i>La dolce vita</i>	Party at Steiners'	a: rhythmic impulse (timpani) [1:23:31-1:25:15]	
	Argument between Marcello & Emma	b: drone (organ) [2:11:46-2:16:30]	
	Steiner's death	c: drone [2:20:01-2:21:20]	
<i>8½</i>	Opening dream	d: rhythmic impulse (timpani) [0:00:20-0:02:18]	
		e: drone [0:01:15-0:02:14]	
	First accidental meeting with the Cardinal	e [0:23:25-0:23:35; 0:23:52-0:24:19]	
	Thermal baths and visit to the Cardinal	e [1:12:15-1:13:33]	
	Visit to the spaceship yard	f: drone [1:18:37-1:19:18; 1:19:58; 1:20:18; 1:20:38-1:20:40]	
		b [1:19:01-1:25:10]	
		g: effect [1:19:39-1:19:54; 1:20:05-1:20:15; 1:21:24-1:21:35]	
<i>Juliet of the Spirits</i>	Vision of the raft of the barbarians	e [0:19:49-0:20:08]	
		h: drone [0:20:05; 0:21:19]	
	Visit to Bishma	i: drone [0:38:38-0:44:29]	
	Giulietta's kid's school play	e [1:09:57-1:12:12]	
		b [1:11:29-1:12:12]	
	Giulietta first visit at Susy's	b [1:16:38-1:18:18; 1:19:49-1:20:22]	
	Giulietta's love rendezvous	e [1:45:36-1:47:33]	
	Final vision	f [2:05:58-2:06:16]	
		j: drone [2:06:17-2:06:35]	
		k: rhythmic-melodic profile (gamelan) [2:07:07-2:07:22; 2:08:38-2:08:51]	
		e [2:07:37-2:08:28; 2:10:09-2:10:15; 2:10:32-2:10:38; 2:10:50-2:11:32]	
		g: effect [2:08:58-2:09:18]	
		b: drone [2:09:29-2:09:37; 2:09:43-2:09:48; 2:09:52-2:09:58]	
		k': rhythmic-melodic-profile [2:10:09-2:10:32]	

Figure 1. Fellini's electroacoustic "sound library."

narrative dimension that no longer has anything to do with the neorealistic objectivity that he had tried to maintain (though in a very personal way) in his films of the 1950s. From *8½* on, but even more with *Juliet of the Spirits*, the wind sound migrates from a still naturalistic, though evocative, function to a definitely expressionistic one. Its use is often synchronized with localized events, like the apparition of a character, as well as a specific action. This is what happens in the opening sequence of *8½*, when Guido advances, flying with open arms over cars stuck in a traffic jam, or in *Juliet of the Spirits*, each time Iris's and Laura's spirits appear. By acquiring these expressionistic features, wind gradually abandons its environmental role, to blend more and more inextricably with the electroacoustic "sound library."

### Colors from a Painter's Palette: Fellini's Electroacoustic "Sound Library"

The number of electroacoustic sound elements in *La dolce vita*, *8½*, and *Juliet of the Spirits* is limited—I have counted only eleven different samples—but I use the term *library* because some of them recur unchanged in all three films, as though they were colors from a painter's palette that are used to depict out-of-the-ordinary soundscapes. In figure 1, I have index-linked each sound with a letter of the alphabet to point out their repetitiveness, and I have distinguished them by different general features to suggest their morphology: (1) drones that can vary from broadband frequencies like filtered white noise (e.g., e) to quite definable frequencies like dissonant organlike chords (e.g., b), (2) short samples of rhythmic impulses, like a kind of gamelan (e.g., k) that happens to be manipulated until it grows almost unrecognizable (e.g., k'), and (3) "pure" synthetic events (e.g., f, g, h).

One's first reaction to these sounds is bafflement. They are not refined, generally raw, very easy to obtain, and in a way predictable. They convey the impression of someone who is enjoying the basic features of his equipment rather than one who knows very well how to obtain what he wants. Nonetheless, though our first guess may lead us to consider such sound objects as a last-minute solution achieved in order to compensate for some weakness in the films' structure, two documents of extreme importance show how they were actually the result of a dramaturgical plan. In Nino Rota's preparatory block notes for *La dolce vita* and *8½* preserved in Nino Rota's Archive in Venice,<sup>10</sup> one reads that some sort of "electronic music" was called for.

This leads us to focus on Rota's role in the decision of providing electronic music (in the cue sheet for *8½* he explicitly refers to it as *his*).<sup>11</sup> We are actually quite far from establishing whether Rota himself composed the electroacoustic sounds for his films or whether he relied on some technicians for them. The habit of relying on uncredited composers and sound technicians during postproduction was widespread in the Italian cinema during the 1960s, especially when competence in the use of electronic music was required.<sup>12</sup> Bruno Nicolai, composer and well-known conductor of many film scores by Ennio Morricone, was often in demand for his skills on the Hammond organ. Gino Marinuzzi Jr., film composer and Rota's close friend, and engineer Paolo Ketoff were reference points in the field of electronics in Rome.<sup>13</sup> One of Ketoff's pupils, sound technician Federico Savina,<sup>14</sup> was involved in some of Fellini's pictures. In a conversation he had with me, he found it plausible that Rota called on Marinuzzi to provide some electronic sounds with his homemade synthesizer, the Fonosynth:

I believe that Rota called for Marinuzzi on many occasions. I could not tell the precise circumstances. Such needs would come up extemporaneously. I used to work in the recording studio; I can recall when some necessities would arise while recording or mixing the music. When they involved other moments of postproduction, they would be done elsewhere. Little by little, the first small private studios spread all over Rome. At a certain point, Marinuzzi had the Synket,<sup>15</sup> then came the Moog. There were also other composers like [Marcello] Giombini, who used electronic resources in every film, and Bruno Nicolai, who was very skilled at playing the Hammond organ and knew how to use vibratos and the Hammond's internal reverberation. I would dare to say that many sound effects in Fellini's pictures were made through the Hammond. We used that kind of trick for dreams, like tape-reversed sound, echo effects, etc. At one time, it was always an experiment. Marinuzzi would call you and tell you, "I need a sound like that . . ." Then, the bottoms [a.k.a. the digital synthesizers] arrived. They were able to do the same things, and so our fascination for all these things diminished a little.<sup>16</sup>

Though barely conclusive, such considerations are sufficient to signal that the issue of electroacoustic sound cannot be ignored but rather should fall within the competence of music scholars as an open and mostly unexplored topic.

### *La dolce vita*: A "mysterious voice from inside the earth"

In a recent essay, Emilio Sala compiled a complete outline of the musical compositions used in *La dolce vita*.<sup>17</sup> Thus, it is particularly easy to arrive at the conclusion that the music in this film is literally all-pervasive. In an almost three-hour movie, the average pause between any two pieces lasts only about three minutes. This datum in a certain way represents the numeric equivalent of the sense of "sound obsession" that, according to Fellini, is one of the keys to understanding this picture:

There is no longer silence, we are deafened by music, the entire film is dominated by this sound obsession. People are scared of silence because they are afraid to hear their remorse within it.<sup>18</sup>

Sala, however, notes that there are some scenes in the film where in contrast to such an obsessive presence there is a lack of





Naturally, any musician (not to mention modern sound designers) can point out the rawness of this sound solution, evident in several aspects of its morphology: its five-minute stillness (an eternity in cinematic terms), its lack of musical development, its looplike repetitiveness, and its predictable use of "cheap" expedients to convey tension (dissonance, vibrato, synthetic timbre, etc.). For these reasons, it is natural to ask oneself whether an expressive necessity might have led Fellini to use this particular sound.

Two opposite hypotheses can be formulated to explain the use of this drone. (1) In an advanced phase of postproduction, the director realized that the sequence lacked rhythm, either being too long or too dull, and then asked a sound technician (possibly Rota himself) to provide a quick sound solution. (2) Fellini deliberately planned to use *that* very effect. Given the absence of documentation regarding the making of this sequence, it is impossible to decide between these two suppositions. But, as a matter of fact, they do not exclude each other. The first is supported by Fellini's well-known tendency to improvise. The second finds confirmation in the almost obsessive insistence with which Fellini will indulge himself with this sound in the following films (see figure 1). After all, Fellini's obsession with some particular musical "flavors," such as Julius Fucik's *Entry of the Gladiators* (occurring twice in *La dolce vita*), may reveal significant analogies with this last assumption.<sup>21</sup>

The morning after the argument with Emma, Marcello is awakened by a phone call informing him of the Steiner family tragedy. His friend has committed suicide after murdering his sons. Obviously shocked, Marcello rushes to his friend's place. Once again lacking both morphological and syntactical development, a rarefied drone (c), characterized by a repetitive envelope and an oscillating intensity, lies under the sequence. This time there are no doubts about the effectiveness of such an expressive resource. It enhances the abyss of sorrow oppressing Marcello and works as a vehicle for the existential vertigo provoked by the extreme deed of a morally upright man who was considered by Marcello as an unattainable model.<sup>22</sup> Following this last observation, our memory goes back to his most recent meeting with Steiner during the party at the latter's place, when another sound event (a) emerged at the very moment that Steiner led Marcello to observe his kids asleep. It is a percussive pulse, once again almost unnoticeable, shedding a haunting light on Steiner's bitter words that anticipate the terrible future tragedy:

Sometimes at night this darkness, this silence weighs on me. Peace frightens me. I'm afraid of peace. It looks like an appearance hiding hell. I think of what my children will see tomorrow. They say the world will be beautiful. How? A phone call can announce the end of the world! One should live beyond emotions, in the harmony of art works . . . in the enchanted order. . . . We should learn to love each other so much in order to live outside of time, detached . . . detached!<sup>23</sup>

Putting together these three episodes, a dramaturgical plan eventually starts to emerge. What earlier seemed to be marginal sound elements now assume an important strategic role once they are linked to the sequences to which they refer. From a narrative perspective, they correspond to Marcello's realization of the substantial failure of his life. It starts with his involvement with Steiner's apparently perfect familiar dimension (sound a)—the higher example of a life surrounded by love and culture—is followed by his failed effort to break free from his hypocritical relationship with Emma (sound b) and ends with the collapse of his residual certainties caused by the assessment of the vanity of his friend's life (sound c).

In his essay, Sala argues that the two most recurrent musical themes in the film—the so-called *I cinesi* and the controversial elaboration from Kurt Weill's *Moritat von Mackie Messer*<sup>24</sup>—structure the dramaturgy of the film on a musical axis that polarizes the two facets of the Roman public's *dolce vita*:<sup>25</sup> the archaic one, "baroque and byzantine-like,"<sup>26</sup> and the modern, fashionable one. They are both decadent expressions of that "sumptuous and wretched tumbledown vessel"<sup>27</sup> that is the microcosm of the film. At the same time, the three electroacoustic samples that I described can be interpreted as expressions of a second thematic axis, whose nature is intimate. It concerns the existential domain of Marcello's affair, his own decadence that is mirrored in Steiner's tragedy. Rather than a musical value, these samples convey a kind of phenomenological dimension of Marcello's existential burden, transferring the disturbing obsession to an aural level.

Thus, the basic features of the sounds, which earlier felt cheap, assume now a clear and iconic role by recalling themselves with each recurrence. Dissonance, vibrato, and synthetic or percussive timbre stand for anxiety, uneasiness, and ancestral fear; the lack of musical development represents the hopeless and trapped condition of the character.

The precious information from Rota's block notes of *La dolce vita* helps to clarify this interpretation as a dramaturgical plan that was present in the early stages of postproduction, though with relevant discrepancies from the final realization. The only references to "electronic music" in the cue sheet are concentrated in the episode of the party at Steiner's place. Nothing is said about Marcello and Emma's argument and Steiner's death (a good clue in support of the hypothesis that such sequences were originally conceived without underscoring sound). A "mysterious electronic music"<sup>28</sup> was supposed to underscore the first part of the party, after "the song in Steiner's place, right before he shows the abstract painting." It was supposed to "continue under various conversations" and eventually cease once a young man played the "dialogue between female [*sic*] wisdom and masculine uncertainty" on the magnetophone. It is the apparent recording of a passage of conversation between Steiner and the poet Iris Tree. I use the term *apparent* because within that tape are some clues scattered about that reveal that the recording does not exactly mirror the live dialogue. While the poet says "primitivo come *una* guglia gotica, sei *così* alto che non puoi sentire più nessuna voce da lassù," the recording reproduces "primitivo come guglia gotica, sei *tanto* alto che non puoi sentire più nessuna voce da lassù."<sup>29</sup> The fact that tape takes some license with the reality depicts and exposes

the illusionary mechanism of recording technologies, and by extension the cinema itself, which is both fake and powerfully real. As a consequence, Emma's attempt to acknowledge the 'sounds of nature' reproduced on the tape turns out to be even more naïve. At that very moment, the wind hiss coming from the tape haunts the first ghostly appearance of Steiner's kids in the room.

If electronic music had been used in this sequence following Fellini and Rota's initial plan, the result would have been infinitely more perturbed, perhaps too much. Only the second occurrence of electronic music, which will turn out to be sound *a*, survives: "[W]hen Steiner enters and opens the veils of his children's beds[,] and during the whole scene[,] again electronic music [for] about 2 minutes, stop [the music] when the light is turned on."<sup>30</sup> Antonio Costa correctly considered all the dramatic tension accumulated in this sequence as the point of convergence for the main narrative streams of the film. It "provides the elements for understanding the reasons for [Marcello and Emma's] future failures."<sup>31</sup> The tension will be resolved only by the two sequences involving Marcello and Emma's argument and Steiner's death. In particular, the structural symmetry with which the second and last visit of Marcello to Steiner's place is constructed is worth remark. Marcello listens again to the tape recording, but this time Steiner's answer to the poet ("If you could see my real height. . . . I'm not taller than this")<sup>32</sup> rips an abyss of sorrow in Marcello. After some quick replies to the policemen, he peers shocked into the camera lens and walks toward the horror of the children's room. Now electronic drone *c* appears and grows in volume once Marcello reaches the balcony where he had his last conversation with Steiner. In Steiner's recorded "testament," the moral dilemma is clear. It is explained in the concepts of "height" and in the metaphor of the "gothic spire." Steiner is a gothic character whose almost sacral austerity (profoundly different from the sacrality of papal Rome) fully embodies the conflict between good and evil, heaven and hell, typical of gothic cathedrals.<sup>33</sup> After all, Steiner had defined himself as "the devil who plays Bach" before playing the organ in the church where Marcello first met him. Yes, the organ.

Perhaps it may seem excessive to try to find a connection between that organ playing Bach and sound *b* underlying Marcello and Emma's argument. But I would like to stress anyway how, under Steiner's fingers, the organ in the church runs through a timbral metamorphosis from the profane to the sacred. At first it is a jazz organ, with that fashionable Farfisa<sup>34</sup> timbre that can be encountered often in Rota's scores of that time: Steiner improvises dance music before interrupting and asking Marcello to put his hands on the keyboard: "You want to try, Marcello?"<sup>35</sup> The timbre produced by Marcello's touch, before transforming into the pipe register suitable for the *Toccata and Fugue in D Minor*, is reminiscent of sound *b*: "Mysterious voice," says Steiner. "It seems to come from inside the earth."<sup>36</sup> The symbolic link between the organ and the descent into hell might be a sort of sonic "subtext" through which Fellini put Marcello's effort to sever his relationship with Emma in the frame of Steiner's tragedy.<sup>37</sup>

### 8½: The Suitcase of the Magician

In Fellini's cinema, nothing is definitive. Everything is repeatable so that it can be misrepresented, disguised, and contradicted. The same organlike drone (*b*), which I have just associated with the symbolic and conceptual core of *La dolce vita*, returns, exactly the same, in 8½ and in *Juliet of the Spirits*. In the former, when film director Guido Anselmi visits the yard of the spaceship that is supposed to be shot in his film, sound *b* can be heard throughout the six-minute sequence. In the latter, it becomes even pervasive, occurring four times (see figure 1). Topical assonances between the argument episode in *La dolce vita* and the occurrences of sound *b* in these other two pictures are quite obvious. In the spaceship sequence of 8½, two important dialogues, between Guido and family-friend Rossella, and between Luisa (Guido's wife) and her confident-suitor Enrico, point out a marital crisis from which the protagonist's existential dilemma emerges, anticipating the argument between Guido and Luisa in the subsequent scene. In *Juliet of the Spirits*, then, the marital crisis is properly the narrative leitmotif of the entire movie.

But the intertextual reminiscences between the three films are not over. The rhythmic pulse (*a*) heard in the sequence with the children's beds in *La dolce vita*, which I said had a barbarian and ancestral presence, is very similar to the one in the opening dream in 8½ (*d*),<sup>38</sup> and in turn can be linked to the narrative topic of barbarian invasions in *Juliet of the Spirits*. The repetitive appearance of a limited number of sounds contributes to create a sense of continuity among these films. To talk about continuity in regard to Fellini means to insert such sound resources within a system of signs that avails itself of all the means of modern cinema to create a sense of constant reminiscence, of *déjà vu* or, better, *déjà entendu*.<sup>39</sup>

With 8½, described by Tullio Kezich as "the most sensational confessional in the history of cinema,"<sup>40</sup> it is no longer sufficient to limit oneself to grasp the narrative value of sound, since this film is metalinguistic by definition, representing paradoxically artistic creation. The film 8½ is simultaneously a "report" of the tormented process of realization that haunted Fellini while conceiving it and a narration of the birth of a film that will never see the light of day. Kezich effectively points out the two poles within which the effort of creation struggles in this film: (1) the intellectual awareness of one's limits and (2) the unavoidable preintellective necessity of abandoning oneself to the stream of imagination:

Guido is a director making a movie that he can't focus on. At his side, there is a mean but not stupid intellectual who pushes him toward an abyss of doubt and reveals his presumed creative impotence. . . . At the other extreme is Maurice, a performance fortune-teller . . . who can read the protagonist's mind and extracts the enigmatic "*asa nisi masa*" (Italian pig Latin for *anima*, or soul).<sup>41</sup> For this tuxedo-wearing clown, show business is the only natural way of life; it connects him to



the "Mystery." Talking about the impossibility of fully comprehending his magical games, he explains, 'There's something in it.' . . . Guido has the hyper-critic hung and accepts instead the clown's choice, deciding at last to identify with him. The inextricable blend of reality and fantasy comes to a wild close with an extraordinary procession of 152 characters from life and the film, crowded onto a merry-go-round, while a band of clowns plays a fanfare under the direction of a child dressed in white.<sup>42</sup>

The gap between the magical and the intellectual side of Guido's character is a good metaphor for the filmmaker's role, interpreted by the character Guido. On the one hand, we have the materiality of cinema, its craftsmanship. On the other hand, we have its magically trustworthy mimesis of actual experience. If we keep the focus on what has been identified as the main target of this film—a tormented confession of creative impotence—we shall concentrate on the methodology that Fellini establishes to achieve his goal. It seems like Fellini is suggesting that the only way to disclose the dignity of honest art is to resort to a certain amount of dissimulation and disguise. Thus, he sticks to the beloved image of the craftsman of entertainment—the magician, the clown, "the confessional acrobat."<sup>43</sup> His methodology consists in presenting a series of tricks. It does not matter if they are common, ill-chosen, or even vulgar, as long as they are necessary for the emergence of his own tragic core. Sound, just like every other element of the filmic construction, is part of this method. Moreover, the electroacoustic sound palette is in a way the most evident manifestation of such a repertoire of tricks. It is the suitcase of the magician.

The spaceship-yard sequence, undoubtedly the pivotal episode in the profile of the confession, is emblematic of the way Fellini organizes, or rather orchestrates, the elements of his "illusionistic number." Sound has a fundamental role. The sequence is organized on three levels of narration: (1) The producer of Guido's film pompously shows his guests the expensive construction of the launchpad for the spaceship and describes in detail how he imagines the main episode of his film. At the same time, comments and criticisms by the visitors and film crew are heard, oscillating between astonishment and open disapproval of Guido. (2) Guido and Rossella, lingering around the base of the yard, discuss Guido's troubles with Luisa and with his film. (3) Enrico tries to gain Luisa's confidence by asking her what is wrong.



Level 1 is developed in a choral way, functioning as a frame for the intimate levels 2 and 3. Its importance in the plot is strategic, as long as it allows the exposure of Guido's artistic facet to public scrutiny. The project described by the producer is implicitly and explicitly decried as superficial and haughty by Guido's friends and colleagues. The useless, exaggerated spaceship embodies the most extreme manifestation of his creative debacle. The science-fiction genre becomes the symbol of mediocrity for a film director who, incapable of saying anything important, resorts to high-budget pomposity. The three narrative elements used to convey the sci-fi mood are (1) the producer's account, (2) the shots of the huge launchpad—a "Tower of Babel" emerging out of a glimmering of lights<sup>44</sup>—and (3) three sound samples: *f*, *b*, and *g*.



Figure 3 shows how the use of the three samples is always motivated by the development of the scene. Each sound's first appearance is perfectly synchronized with significant shots of the launchpad, with the result that it anticipates and emphasizes the sci-fi environment conveyed by the producer's words. Sound *f* fades in, slightly anticipating the left-to-right panning by the camera in shot 428 (figure 3.1), which gradually frames the launchpad in a full long shot. Sound *b* fades in with the second shot of the construction (figure 3.2, shot 430). Then, the fade in of sound *g* in corresponds with the close-up of the scale model of the spaceship (figure 3.3, shot 432).




Following the development of the scene, however, the three sounds achieve a new narrative function, differentiating level 1 from levels 2 and 3. Sounds *f* and *g* are associated only with level 1, as though they were the producer's intended ideal soundtrack (e.g., figure 3.4, shot 435; and figure 3.6, shots 441-42), and they fade out in synch with every shot of Rossella and Guido (level 2; e.g., figure 3.2, shot 433; figure 3.5, shot 438; and figure 3.6, shot 442). By contrast, sound *b* lasts the entire scene, covering different functions depending on the images associated with it. When mixed with *f* and *g*, it contributes to enhance the sci-fi mood; when it is left alone in correspondence with level 2, it conveys connotations of anxiety and existential anguish analogous to those of *La dolce vita*.



Fellini, in other words, uses sound to contrast Guido's public and private dimensions. On the one hand, like the illusionist who unfolds all his tricks to appeal to and mislead the audience, he is parading all audiovisual devices necessary to bolster the producer's belief (that Guido's film will be a blockbuster narrating a postatomic apocalypse). On the other hand, by including the visitors' critical comments, showing Luisa's lack of enthusiasm, and indicating Guido's evident disinterest in his own movie set, Fellini is paving the way for Guido's nihilist admission that his life is broken, both artistically and existentially. Only after bragging to Rossella about his brand new film, saying, "Well, in my picture everything happens, I'm putting everything in, even the sailor who does the softshoe,"<sup>45</sup> does Guido let his truth emerge. The scene comes across as extremely touching because the audience is caught completely off-guard. Guido is down and out, but, by confessing his failure, it is possible for him (and us) to find the meaning, or rather the only chance, of a true creative commitment:




I thought I had everything clear in my head, I wanted to make an honest film... no lies, no compromises. I thought I had something so simple to say: a film that would be helpful to everybody, that would finally bury everything that's dead within us. Instead, I find I don't have the courage to bury anything. I'm totally confused now and [with] this tower on my hands. Who knows why things turned out this way? Where did I go wrong? I really have nothing to say. But I want to say it just the same.<sup>46</sup>

3.1				
	*			
Shot N.	428 (pan l/r, until the camera frames the spaceship in full-shot)		429	
Plot	[Level 1] Two cars (with the producer, Guido, Luisa, Rossella, and other visitors) arrive to the yard on the beach.		[Level 1] The cars park in front of the yard. The producer auto-ironically comments on his choice to give into Guido's desires. All characters look up at the construction.	
Sound		* f		
Time	1:18:28	1:18:38 *	1:18:45	

3.2				
	*		*	
Shot N.	430 (pan u/d, until the camera frames the construction in medium shot)		431	
Plot	[Level 1] The producer calls for Renato, staring at the yard. Renato heads towards him.		[Level 2] Guido asks Rossella whether something is wrong with Luisa; Rossella answers that she does not know. She notes the scale model of the spaceship and asks what is it; a member of the crew tells her.	
Sound		* b	*	
Time	* 1:19:02		* 1:19:16	

3.3				
	*			
Shot N.	432 (pan and dolly r/l following the visitors and framing the model in close-up shot)		433	434
Plot	[Level 1] The producer explains the meaning of the structure: "E' la rampa [*] di lancio dell'astronave, la scena più importante del film" (This is the launching pad of the spaceship, the most important scene in the picture)		[Level 1] A friend of Luisa's asks her sarcastically whether Guido is going in for science fiction.	[Level 1] Luisa replies annoyed that she does not know and that the friend should ask him.
Sound	* g			
Time	1:19:38	* 1:19:39	1:19:45	1:19:50

3.4				
	*			*
Shot N.	435 (dolly l/r and panning ld/ru, following the visitors and framing models of a jet, a rocket, and an antenna in the foreground)			436
Plot	[Level 1] The group starts going up the stairs of the yard. While the producer praises the construction, some members of the party start making fun of it, calling it a "carnival".			[Level 1] The producer asks Cesarino how many pounds of concrete it took to build the launching pad; Cesarino replies emphatically, "400 tons".
Sound			* g	
	* f			
Time	* 1:19:55			* 1:20:09 1:20:11

3.5				
		*		
Shot N.	437	438 (pan u/d, until the camera frames Guido and Rossella in a long shot)		439
Plot	[Level 1] Guido's sister-in-law bitterly notes that the spaceship's cost is worth 10 apartments. The producer digs at her, asking whether she is in love with Guido; she harshly answers that she prays God not to marry someone like Guido.	[Level 1] Conocchia complains about the construction costs and claims that a good painted backdrop like in the old days would be better. [Level 2] Downstairs on the beach, Rossella's voice talking to Guido can be heard.		[Level 3] Enrico tries to gain Luisa's confidence. He asks her whether there is something wrong with her. Luisa answers that there is nothing wrong. An airplane passes over. Luisa looks downstairs. [Level 1] The producer's voice-over is heard, describing the main sequence of the film.
Sound		* f		*
Time	1:20:20	* 1:20:37	* 1:20:50	1:20:52




3.6				
		*	*	
Shot N.	440	441	442 (dolly l/r, following Guido in a medium shot until Rossella is framed in close-up)	
Plot	[Level 1] The producer's account continues, off-screen: The planet is ravaged by nuclear war.	[Level 3] Enrico tries to console Luisa by saying that Guido seemed very happy to see her, while [Level 1] the voice of the producer is still heard.	[Level 1] With voice-over, the Producer continues describing the scene: an atomic pestilence, the fleeing of survivors on board the spaceship to another planet. [Level 2] Guido and Rossella watch above at the construction. Rossella digs at Guido about his ambition of becoming a Prophet "laying it on thick".	
Sound		* h	*	
Time	1:21:20	* 1:21:24	1:21:29	* 1:21:36 <...>

Figure 3. The spaceship sequence from 8½. Abbreviations: l/r = left/right; ld/ru = left down/right up etc. Asterisks highlight synch-points between shots and sounds.

This is one of the points where the identification between Guido and Fellini is most evident. The metatextual structure of the film turns out to coincide with Guido's work-in-progress, and the difficulties felt by the main character can be read as a declaration of poetics by Fellini himself. The magician Fellini has made us believe he was falling into a sci-fi cliché, but he was just preparing his coup de theatre: sincerity.

### ***Juliet of the Spirits*: the 'miracle of naked experience'**

With *Juliet of the Spirits*, the metaphor of the magician is even more effective. It depends a lot on the specific topic of this picture, the representation of a marital crisis, which this time is presented from the woman's perspective. In fact, the topic is affected by a much more obsessive issue: the relationship between imagination and reality. Perception, the supernatural, memory, and morality are facets of the same concern in this film, just as they were in Fellini's biography of that time. *Juliet of the Spirits* was the result of an intense and undoubtedly troubled search that involved Fellini's fascination for real magicians like Gustavo Adolfo Rol, Fellini's attendance at séances with his wife and their acquaintances, his experience with lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), and his Jungian therapy with Ernst Bernhard that dramatically ended with the death of the analyst just a few weeks before the arrival of the movie in theaters.<sup>47</sup>

Kezich notes that, in contrast to the aforementioned films, this time "the plot is fluid and convincing, even from the psychological perspective, but it tends toward the fantastical with a stylistic intensity that Fellini had perfected through the dialectical, carefully modulated 8½."<sup>48</sup> Perhaps simply the apparent linearity of the plot makes Fellini's effort to mix the borders between reality and vision so evident. Especially in the second part of the film, when Giulietta's visions grow more frequent, it is increasingly difficult for the spectator, as well as for the protagonist, to understand what is real and what is not. No wonder, then, that Fellini radicalizes his approach to sound and image.

Electronic sound and color film are the means through which perception can be questioned without according anything to cinematic conventions. Fellini's first use of color,<sup>49</sup> just like Antonioni's in *The Red Desert*,<sup>50</sup> has to be closely related to contemporary scientific studies on the artificial alterations of perception. Following Aldous Huxley's example, in the summer of 1964, Fellini takes a controlled amount of LSD while under the supervision of Freudian analyst Emilio Servadio, who had cured Fellini's extreme depression after *La strada* (1954).<sup>51</sup> It is Fellini himself who links this experience to his work on the film, and in particular to his reflections about color, in an interview with the BBC:

In order to try to understand what colors really are in a detached way, you have to become a yogi. . . . Also the experience of making a color picture can be a spiritual experience. [LSD] was a bit of a disappointing experience. I have not the memory of feeling a special sensation, but the doctor gave me an explanation, and I agree with him. He said that an artist lives always in the imagination, so the barrier between sensorial reality and his imagination is very vague; an artist is always here and there. . . . Anyway I remember I had some exaltation about colors. I saw colors not like they normally are—we see colors in the objects, you know; we see objects that are colored. I saw colors just like they are, detached from the objects. I had for the first time the feeling of the presence of the colors in a detached way.<sup>52</sup>

The idea that color, thanks to LSD, would show its essence freed from any link with objects—what Huxley called "the miracle of naked existence"<sup>53</sup>—is part of a process that accentuates Fellini's expressionistic trend, leading him to interpret reality as a permanent vision in which pure senses prevail over intellectual elaboration. Moreover, this idea matches the narrative core of *Juliet of the Spirits*, which is focused on the mediumistic abilities of the main character:

Like mescaline takers, many mystics perceive supernaturally brilliant colors, not only with their inner eye, but even in the objective world around them. Similar reports are made by psychics and sensitives. There are certain mediums for whom during long periods the mescaline taker's brief revelation is a matter of daily and hourly experience.<sup>54</sup>

It is not illogical to claim that sound behaves similarly to color in this movie. Thanks to the dubbing of the dialogue, voices are often heard independent of any visual perspective. They are whispered as though they came from an inner perception that is dissociated from the characters with whom they should be associated. Ambient sounds (wind, fire, sea), para-atmospheric sounds (white-noise hiss *e*, hypertrophic fan sound *i*), electronic sounds (*f*, *g*, *h*, *j*), and paramusical sounds (*b*, *k*) follow one another like acoustic epiphanies. They aim to be experienced per se, almost systematically released from univocal semantic connotations, unless they are able to build unusual synesthetic relationships with elements of the sensitive visions.

That is the case for instance with the audiovisual unity made up of Laura's whispered voice + wind sound + fire image + Laura's ghost, repeated three times in the same way in the last part of the film. In figure 4, the first of such occurrences (at 1:46:56) is exemplified: the suddenness of the scary appearance is rendered under the visual profile by a complex camera movement that, quickly panning from up to down, completely disorients the perspective, while under the aural profile Laura's voice is first heard off-frame; then a strong wind blows, emphasizing Laura's ghostly apparition.

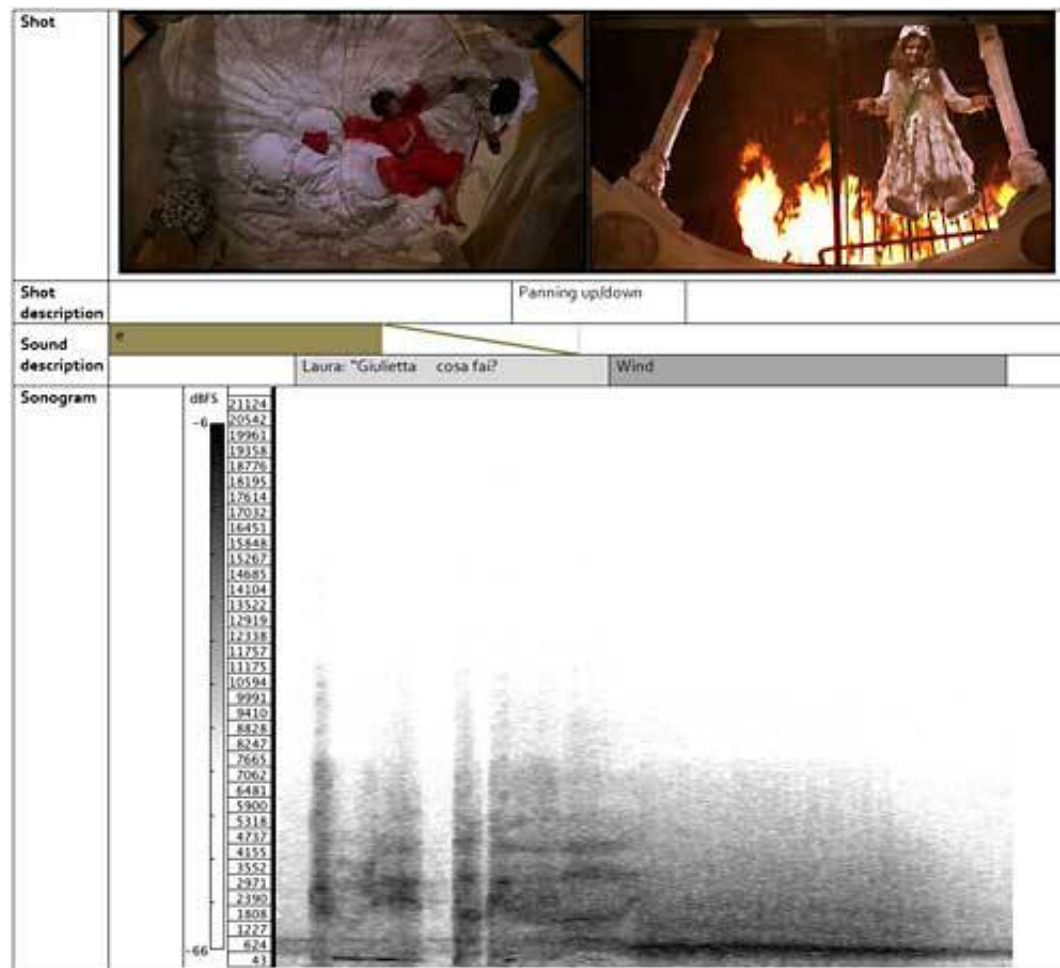


Figure 4. Laura's ghost (1:46:56), from *Juliet of the Spirits*.

Such a unity of image and sound signals, to put it in Huxley's words, a peak in terms of "intensity of existence":

[S]patial relationships had ceased to matter very much and . . . my mind was perceiving the world in terms of other than spatial categories. At ordinary times the eye concerns itself with such problems as *Where?—How far?—How situated in relation to what?* In the mescaline experience the implied questions to which the eye responds are of another order. Place and distance cease to be of much interest. The mind does its perceiving in terms of intensity of existence, profundity of significance, relationships within a pattern.<sup>55</sup>

Space, considered in Huxley's psychedelic terms, is a key element for understanding of the aims of *Juliet of the Spirits*. The picture is characterized by audacious film editing that renders familiar spaces like Giulietta's house and garden as sorts of labyrinths. Nothing is like what we would expect in terms of space organization because the consequentiality of shots is frequently denied. To deny the usual relationships of cause and effect in space means precisely to question the very sense of reality as perceived by common sense. Such an idea was present in Fellini's mind from the earliest elaboration of the film's subject, as evidenced by a preparatory screenplay for the film. In this next passage, in the midst of Giulietta's final delirium, it is noticeable how the director underlines the mismatches of the protagonist's space expectations with what she "actually" experiences (highlighted in bold italics by me):























5.1			
Shot N.	109	110	111
Plot	Giulietta hands a towel and a suntan lotion to her maid, removes her glasses, and looks at herself in the mirror; in the background, her nieces and their nanny sit on the sand.	Susy sits outside to the right of her canopy, surrounded by two followers.	Giulietta sits back in her chair, closes her eyes and bows her head forward, asleep, with her face covered by a hat. We hear the French nanny telling a lullaby to Giulietta's nieces.
Sound	<...> sea		e
Music	<...> <i>Vascello di Susy</i>		gong
Time	0:19:09	0:19:27	0:19:32
5.2			
Shot N.	112	113	114
Plot	Occhio di Lince, wearing a red nightgown and a bowler hat, is coming out from the sea, pulling a hawser over his shoulder.	Giulietta moans, shaking her head, while asleep.	Giulietta enters frame from left, looking around, lost. Occhio di Lince hands her the hawser and exits frame to the left. Giulietta starts pulling the hawser.
Sound			Occhio di Lince's whispered voice: "Giulietta... mi aiuti per favore... sono vecchio... del resto riguarda proprio lei"
Time	0:19:53	0:19:57	0:20:03
5.3			
Shot N.	115	116	117
Plot	Giulietta, her face covered by the hat, pulls the hawser, stepping back.	Calm sea and horizon. A sort of big boat enters frame from the left.	Giulietta quits pulling the hawser. She is tired and looks, surprised and disturbed, into the distance.
Sound	hawser's rubbing noise		hawser's rubbing noise
Time	0:20:21	0:20:25	0:20:34
5.4			
Shot N.	118	119	120
Plot	The boat is still, partially out of frame on the left. In the center is a raft with two horses alive and one supine, presumably dead.	The boat's rusted hull opens, uncovering some motionless people, some of whom are half-naked.	Giulietta stares, scared by the scene.
Sound	wind		Giulietta's whispered voice: "Dottore..."
Time	0:20:39	0:20:46	0:20:54
5.5			
Shot N.	121 (zoom in and pan l/r in close-up of the people on the boat)	122 (pan l/r, leaving Giulietta off to the right and framing Don Raffaele in long shot)	123
Plot		Don Raffaele sits on a chair, shaking his head mechanically.	
Sound	wind		Giulietta's whispered voice: "Dottore aiuto..."
Time	0:20:56	0:21:01	0:21:07
5.6			
Shot N.	124	125	126
Plot	An Eastern-looking warrior (with his back to the camera) turns his threatening face toward the camera. In the background are other warriors.	Giulietta (with her back to the camera) walks with unnaturally long strides on the beach.	The head of a warrior emerges from water, while in the background the raft moves from right to left, crowded with warriors ready for war. Suddenly the warrior in the water stands up with a spear in his hand, ready to attack.
Sound	wind		airplane
Time	0:21:13	0:21:15	0:21:22
5.7			
Shot N.	127 (close-up)	*	
Plot	Giulietta on her beach-chair, awakes with a start. After a while she calms [*] down, realizing she has been dreaming.		
Sound			
Music			* <i>Amore per tutti (repr.)</i> [...]
Time	0:21:29		

Figure 5. The boat of the barbarians, from *Juliet of the Spirits*. Abbreviations: l/r = left/right; ld/ru = left down/right up etc.



[Giulietta] snaps open another door that **should lead** directly to the stairs. **But she finds herself, instead, in the large boudoir**, where the toilette table is. The room is immersed in half-light, and the only shape standing out is her Mother's, bright, marble, and abstract, sitting in front of the mirror, white in the shadow, in a candid silk nightgown, brushing her hair in regal calm. . . . Then [Giulietta] twirls round and exits the room, closing the door carefully. **She frantically searches for a "real" exit** leading her to the pinewood.<sup>56</sup>

In the film realization, sound plays a big part in this effect of disorientation. Borders between in and out, distance and proximity, are completely transgressed. During the first of Giulietta's visions (see figure 5), on the beach at Fregene, close sounds, like the whispered voice of private investigator Occhio di Lince, as well as that of Giulietta calling for the doctor, contradict long shots 114 and 115, while sound e, a pure sine wave tuned on a b flat<sup>2</sup>, sort of flattens the spatial perspective. The absence of the sound of the sea is the most evident oddity of the filmed environment. When the wind comes up (shot 118), it is intended to emphasize the ghostly apparition of the raft—similar to the use of wind associated with Steiner's children in *La dolce vita*—rather than as an element of the diegetic soundscape.

Finally, Rota's music works as a frame for the sequence. The piece preceding the vision, called *Vascello di Susy* (Susy's vessel),<sup>57</sup> ends with a rarefied coda, enhanced by the reverberation of the woodblock and by the final bang on the gong, which ritually announces the start of the subsequent developments. That of the gong is, after all, the same sound that establishes the start and the end of the hypnotic numbers of the magician in *The Nights of Cabiria* and can be considered another *idée fixe* of Fellini's sonic imagination.<sup>58</sup> The music is absent throughout the sequence of the vision. With Giulietta's awakening, it suddenly synchronizes to the reprise of the piece *Amore per tutti* (Love for everyone).<sup>59</sup>

The exclusion of music from mediumistic visions is maintained throughout the film, thus establishing two different rhythms: that of life and that of vision. The first is pervaded by Rota's dance beat, full of "flights" toward the subconscious and internal reminiscences. The latter is punctuated with sounds from the "library," and it seems out of time, contemplative, yet neither ecstatic nor peaceful. Giulietta does not manage to accept her spirits as part of her psychological inheritance. She is constantly struggling with a sense of guilt that seems incompletely relieved even by the last apparition of spirits whom she calls "friends" in the final sequence. The use of echo on the last spirits' voices does not seem to convey a convincing happy end.

For all of these reasons, *Juliet of the Spirits* cannot be regarded as a film that resolves anything for Fellini. Rather, it initiated a spiritual research for him into the great eschatological topics of death and morality. They were bound to become the conceptual cores of *Il viaggio di G. Mastorna*, a never-realized and perhaps unrealizable project that would haunt Fellini for the next five years. After a serious psychophysical breakdown resulting from his difficult and tormented failure with *Mastorna*, Fellini would emerge much changed.<sup>60</sup> He was able to stem (and perhaps to bypass) such huge topics by reaching an objective detachment through recourse to archetype. The pseudoliterary shores of *Toby Dammit* (in the trilogy *Spirits of the Dead* [1968]), *Satyricon*, and *Casanova*<sup>61</sup> sublimated the nightmare of subjectivism while allowing the director to pursue stimulating new formal paths.

It is not accidental, then, that the functions of electroacoustic sound are subverted in *Satyricon*. There are no longer sound tricks to be observed one at a time, no longer musical reminiscences of other films. Sound, together with the filmmaker's creative act, are completely depersonalized in an ethnoelectronic "ocean." After such an explosion, nothing of this tormented survey in the abyss of sound will survive. Fellini will return to more typical environmental sound effects (like the wind), reckoned as sufficient for a more mature, but perhaps less ambitious, inspiration.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Fellini's sketches are collected in Tullio Kezich and Vittorio Boarini, eds., *Federico Fellini: The Book of Dreams* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> This is how scenographer Dante Ferretti, who collaborated with Fellini in the last part of his career, recollects their discussions about dreams:

Sometimes he asked me, "What did you dream last night?" In case I did not dream, I had to invent. So I "dreamt" women at the fish market; I "dreamt" all the things he wanted me to say. He used to let me speak, then he used to tell me, "I will not allow you to be more of a liar than me." (interview in the documentary *The Magic of Fellini*, directed by Carmen Piccinni [Image Entertainment, 2002])

<sup>3</sup> James Lastra, *Sound Technology and American Cinema: Perception, Representation, Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 96.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>5</sup> For an overview on optical or *drawn* sound, see Hugh Davies, "Drawn Sound," *Grove Music Online*, in *Oxford Music Online*, 9

December 2010, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.pros.lib.unimi.it/subscriber/article/grove/music/47632>. For a scholarly perspective about the implications of drawn sound in early narrative sound cinema, see Thomas Y. Levin, "'Tones from Out of Nowhere': Rudolph Pfenninger and the Archaeology of Synthetic Sound," *Grey Room* 12 (Summer 2003): 33-79.

<sup>6</sup> *Forbidden Planet* (dir. Fred M. Wilcox, 1956) was the first feature film in Hollywood whose music score was created completely through electronic circuits without resorting to any traditional musical instrument. Composers Louis and Bebe Barron were not credited as musicians, and for this film the singular credit "electronic tonalities" was coined (see James Wierzbicki, *Louis and Bebe Barrons' "Forbidden Planet": A Film Score Guide* [Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2005]).

<sup>7</sup> For an overview of the concept of cinematic narration in cinema and a discussion about the categories of strong narration, weak narration, and antinarration, see Francesco Casetti and Federico Di Chio, *Analisi del film* (1990; repr., Milan: Bompiani, 2007), 164-206.

<sup>8</sup> The birth of sound design in the United States by the end of the 1960s can be reasonably linked to the development of sound synthesis and manipulation in avant-garde and popular music, as argued by William Whittington in *Sound Design & Science Fiction* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007). I deal with this issue in "Sound Design: Ambiguity and Historical Necessity of a Fashionable Term," *Worlds of Audio Vision* (2010), available at [http://www-5.unipv.it/wav/pdf/WAV\\_Corbella\\_2010\\_eng.pdf](http://www-5.unipv.it/wav/pdf/WAV_Corbella_2010_eng.pdf) (accessed January 2011).

<sup>9</sup> There are plenty of anecdotes concerning Fellini's daring use of dubbing. Let me quote what Fiammetta Profili says about it in *The Magic of Fellini*:

During dubbing he used to change all the actors' lines. Of course there were huge troubles with sync. It happened that he got actors with closed mouths to talk. The desperate mixer would say, "Federico, he cannot say the line; his mouth is closed!" He would reply, "What does it matter? He is a ventriloquist." And he put the line in.

<sup>10</sup> The parts of Nino Rota's block notes I am referring to are transcribed in Giovanni Morelli, "Mackie? Messer? Nino Rota e la quarta persona singolare del soggetto lirico," in *L'undicesima Musa: Nino Rota e i suoi media*, ed. Veniero Rizzardi (Rome: CIDIM-RAI, 2001), 34-35, 47-57.

<sup>11</sup> The music note for 8½ is actually an outline in which Nino Rota separates his original music used in the film from music by other composers. Under the column "minutaggio musica mia" [minutes of my music], Rota writes, "[510] Musica elettronica 8'30'' circa" (Morelli, "Mackie? Messer?" 125). This means that about 8 minutes and 30 seconds of electronic music was originally planned. This count matches the addition of the lengths of sounds *b*, *f*, and *g* in the spaceship-yard sequence.

<sup>12</sup> Maurizio Corbella, *Musica elettroacustica e cinema in Italia negli anni Sessanta* (Ph.D. diss., University of Milan, 2010). A very similar situation, in terms of uncredited contributors of electronic music to film scores, emerges from Warren Sherk's essay dealing with John Beaver's activity in Hollywood ("Paul Beaver: Analog Synthesist Extraordinaire," in *Film Music 2: History, Theory, Practice*, ed. Claudia Gorbman and Warren Sherk [Sherman Oaks, CA: Film Music Society, 2004], 113-43).

<sup>13</sup> Maurizio Corbella, "Paolo Ketoff e le radici cinematografiche della musica elettronica romana," *Acoustical Art and Artifacts: Technology, Aesthetics, Communication* (AAA TAC) 6 (2009): 65-75.

<sup>14</sup> Federico Savina is currently the most authoritative historical figure in the field of postproduction sound in the Italian cinema of the 1960s and 1970s. He started by the end of the 1950s to work at Fonolux in Rome as a pupil of Paolo Ketoff and later became technical director and rerecording mixer at International Recording. He collaborated with some of the most prominent filmmakers and composers of the international cinema, such as Fellini, Michelangelo Antonioni, Luchino Visconti, Sergio Leone, Joseph Losey, Roman Polanski, Jerry Goldsmith, Philip Sarde, Ennio Morricone, and Elmer Bernstein. He is the current president of the ATIC (Associazione Tecnica Italiana per la Cinematografia e la Televisione) and teaches at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia [Experimental Film Center] in Rome.

<sup>15</sup> The Synket, one of the first portable synthesizers, was invented and built contemporaneously with the Moog synthesizer around 1964 by Paolo Ketoff with a fundamental contribution by American composer John Eaton. In subsequent years, it was used by composers both in music for films and by the avant-garde, though it was never mass-produced. I have stated that, among film music composers, Morricone and Egisto Macchi owned personal handmade exemplars of the Synket (Corbella, "Paolo Ketoff," 74; and Corbella, "Synthesizers as Extensions of the Score: Marinuzzi, Macchi, and Morricone and the Early Era of Electronics in the Italian Cinema," paper presented at the Cinesonika Conference, Simon Fraser University, Surrey, Canada, 13-14 November 2010).

<sup>16</sup> Personal conversation with Federico Savina, 18 March 2009.

<sup>17</sup> Emilio Sala, "Osessione sonora, mimetismo e familiarità perturbata nelle musiche di Nino Rota per *La dolce vita* di Fellini," *Arts and Artifacts in Movies: Technology, Aesthetics, Communication* (AAM TAC) 7 (2010): 127-40.

- <sup>18</sup> Federico Fellini, "Sono un peccatore anch'io," *L'Europeo* 16, no. 8 (21 February 1960): 42, quoted in Sala, "Osessione sonora," 128.
- <sup>19</sup> Sala, "Osessione sonora," 128.
- <sup>20</sup> The time line matches shots 853-946, between cues 58 and 59, as indicated in *ibid.* (137).
- <sup>21</sup> References to this particular piece and Nino Rota's sublimations of it in Fellini's films, can be found in Sala, "Osessione sonora," 134-35; Morelli, "Mackie? Messer?" 30-33; and Sergio Miceli, "Fellini e la musica come personaggio (1952-1963)," in *La musica nel film: Arte e artigianato* (Florence: Discanto, 1982), 260-305. Miceli recently reedited and expanded his essay as chapter 2 in *Musica e cinema nella cultura del Novecento* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2010), 333-93. Following this second edition of his essay, he added a new chapter 3, titled "'Da Giulietta degli spiriti' a 'Prova d'orchestra' (1965-1979)" (395-461), which deals with the latest collaborations between Fellini and Rota.
- <sup>22</sup> During their latest meeting, Marcello had told Steiner,
- La tua casa è un vero rifugio, sai. I tuoi figli, tua moglie, i tuoi libri, i tuoi amici straordinari. Io sto perdendo i miei giorni, non combinerò più niente. [Your house is a refuge. Your wife, the children, your books, your extraordinary friends. I'm wasting time. I won't manage anything anymore.] (dialogue from the film)
- <sup>23</sup> Quoted from the dialogue of the film (English subtitles)
- <sup>24</sup> The controversy caused by the main theme's resemblance to Kurt Weill's melody has been summed up in Francesco Lombardi, ed., *Fra cinema e musica del Novecento: Il caso Nino Rota dai documenti* (Florence: Olschki, 2000), 88-91.
- <sup>25</sup> Sala, "Osessione sonora," 131-33.
- <sup>26</sup> Federico Fellini, "Su 'La dolce vita': La parola a Fellini," *Bianco e nero* 21, nos. 1-2 (1960): 9.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>28</sup> Morelli, "Mackie? Messer?" 49
- <sup>29</sup> Dialogue from the film.
- <sup>30</sup> Morelli, "Mackie? Messer?" 49.
- <sup>31</sup> Antonio Costa, *Federico Fellini. La dolce vita* (Turin: Lindau, 2010), 96.
- <sup>32</sup> Quoted from the dialogue of the film (English subtitles).
- <sup>33</sup> Tullio Kezich attributes this to Pier Paolo Pasolini, who was advising Fellini on the difficult casting of Steiner's role; that is, the comparison between the physical presence of Alain Cuny and that of a gothic cathedral (Kezich, *Federico Fellini: His Life and Works*, trans. Minna Proctor [New York: Faber and Faber, 2006], 194-206).
- <sup>34</sup> Farfisa is an electronics manufacturer based in Italy. The name was commonly used in reference to their portable organs that became ubiquitous among rock bands and other combo groups during the 1960s.
- <sup>35</sup> Quoted from the dialogue of the film (English subtitles).
- <sup>36</sup> Quoted from the dialogue of the film (English subtitles).
- <sup>37</sup> This last assertion partially rehabilitates the use of *The Toccata and Fugue in D Minor*, which since early critical writings has been regarded as a cheap stereotype for the representation of the intellectual, as reported by Miceli ("Fellini e la musica," 283-84). As will be clearer from the rest of my essay, neither musical originality nor sophisticated wit interest Fellini. Fellini's apparently naïve approach to music and sound is perfectly functional to his dramaturgy.
- <sup>38</sup> In this case, Nino Rota's notes for the music of 8½ identify sound *d* with timpani, thus not a properly electroacoustic event, though still at the edge of noise (Morelli, "Mackie? Messer?" 34).

<sup>39</sup> Beside Morelli's landmark contribution (ibid.) to the role of reminiscence, pastiche, and self-borrowing in Rota's poetics, it is worth noting how Miceli's intuition of considering Rota's music as a character in Fellini's pictures can be fruitfully used to understand the narrative role of recurrent electroacoustic sounds throughout the films I am considering (Miceli, "Fellini e la musica").

<sup>40</sup> Kezich, *Federico Fellini*, 234.

<sup>41</sup> Rather than referring to the "soul," *ana-nisi-masa* probably refers to the Jungian concept of the *anima*. As I note further on, Fellini was undergoing Jungian analysis at the time. For Jung, the *anima* is an archetypal manifestation, in one form or another, of the collective unconscious.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 242-43.

<sup>43</sup> "The confessional acrobats are Federico and his alter ego, both ready to break their backs for a show in which everything becomes part of a total visual delirium" (ibid., 243).

<sup>44</sup> Kezich claims that scenographer Piero Gherardi was inspired by Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *Tower of Babel* in building the spaceship yard (ibid., 244).

<sup>45</sup> Quoted from the dialogue of the film (English subtitles).

<sup>46</sup> Quoted from the dialogue of the film (English subtitles).

<sup>47</sup> Kezich, *Federico Fellini*, 251-64.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 259.

<sup>49</sup> *Juliet of the Spirits* was Fellini's first color film, with the exception of *Le tentazioni del dottor Antonio* episode of *Boccaccio 70* (1962).

<sup>50</sup> In a conversation with Jean-Luc Godard, Michelangelo Antonioni describes the relationship between his treatment of color in *The Red Desert* and scientific reports about the altered perceptions of neurotic and psychotic people (Jean-Luc Godard, "Intervista a Michelangelo Antonioni" [November 1964], in *Michelangelo Antonioni*, ed. G. Martini [Bologna: Falsopiano—Regione Emilia Romagna, 2007], 166-79). I deal with *The Red Desert* with reference to its electronic music in Corbella, "Sperimentazione elettroacustica e cinema d'autore in Italia negli anni '60: Due casi di studio," *Comunicazioni sociali*, "Sonoro," 1, 2011, in print.

<sup>51</sup> The attempted cure with Emilio Servadio after *La strada* had in fact turned out to be negative, considering that Fellini turned to Jungian analysis with Ernst Bernhard as a consequence of it. Ferdinando Camon argues that Fellini's turn from Freud to Jung can be explained by referring to the structure and theoretical background of Jungian analysis, which better fit the director's artistic (not therapeutic) goal (Camon, "I sogni di Federico Fellini: Cosa c'è sotto le cancellature," paper presented at the International Conference on *The Book of Dreams* by F. Fellini, Rimini, Italy, 10 November 2007, [http://www.ferdinandocamon.it/articolo\\_2007\\_11\\_10\\_SognFell.htm](http://www.ferdinandocamon.it/articolo_2007_11_10_SognFell.htm) [accessed 12 June 2010]).

<sup>52</sup> Transcription of an interview that Fellini gave at the BBC presumably in 1965. It is contained in the extras of the 2002 DVD of *Juliet of the Spirits* (Criterion Collection). Due to Fellini's well-known idiosyncratic spoken English, I've made some grammatical adaptations.

<sup>53</sup> Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception* (1954), in *The "Doors of Perception" and "Heaven and Hell"* (New York: Harper & Row, 1990), 17.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>56</sup> Federico Fellini, *G. degli spiriti (titolo provvisorio): Sceneggiatura provvisoria (Ma in fondo non è tutto provvisorio in questo mondo?)* (1965), typewritten screenplay, Biblioteca Luigi Chiarini, Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, Rome, 344 (my translation).

<sup>57</sup> Copyrighted as "N. 7 Vascello di Susy," in "Programma musicale di film sonoro" (musical program to be registered at SIAE), Nino Rota Archive, Cini Foundation, Venice.

<sup>58</sup> Kezich reports, "Neither symphony nor chamber music interests Fellini, and operas make him think of funny stories—both real and invented. As a child he'd watched Riccardo Zandonai's *I cavalieri di Ekebù* from his grandfather's lap high up in the balcony, and would be transfixed by the huge gong" (*Federico Fellini*, 332).

<sup>59</sup> Copyrighted as "N. 8 Amore per tutti ripresa," in "Programma musicale di film sonoro" (see note 57).

<sup>60</sup> Kezich, *Federico Fellini*, 265-80.

<sup>61</sup> It is well known that all of these subjects are only loosely related to the original literary work. In most cases, Fellini read the books only after making the films.