

A SWISS ANALYST IN CINECITTÀ:  
PETER AMMANN SPEAKS OF FELLINI *MASTORNA*,  
*SATYRICON* AND *AFRICA*<sup>1</sup>

By Giovanni Sorge

“Sometimes, years later, they come suddenly out of nothing, fragments of scenes, a view of streets, expressions on faces, lines pronounced in silence, the indecipherable gaze of a character ... They’re shreds of the film as I wanted to make it, an onslaught of images that I never made but that I lived with for a long time before I started shooting. They reappear without evocation in that floating and undefined layer of memory, paler, more discolored, crumbling, with the mutual reproach of ghosts that never took bodily form, and then they silently disappear as if swallowed by the empty, dark spaces of my imagination. But they always leave a vague feeling of remorse and bitterness. Will they become part of another film? Perhaps completely transformed, unrecognizable?”<sup>2</sup>

“Nothing, I know nothing. I only know that I must not be a Christian. And let’s hope that some muse comes to my aid. I’ll have fun. They’ll say I did something bizarre, with neither head nor tail. It’s going to be a drugged out film. But what do I know? The more virtually alive a film is, the more unknown it is to its author. That’s true for all artists; but especially for a director. A director is the captain of a ship that sails toward an unknown destination. Like Columbus. Can you imagine if he had told the crew that he didn’t know where he was going?! And yet, that’s exactly how I feel. Until I start shooting, I really don’t know what I’m going to do.”<sup>3</sup>

“We’re in the house where Richard Wagner lived between 1851 and 1853, while he was working on the libretto for *Rhinegold*. Presumably in his studio.” Calm and slightly amused, the voice of my interviewee catches me off guard. In fact the room in which we are sitting, within a ground floor apartment in an elegant building in Zürich, doesn’t appear particularly “Wagnerian.” Standing out in the center of the room are two wooden boxes holding sand, while a myriad of small and carefully arranged colorful figures seem to watch us silently from the shelves of the bookcase beside me, as if waiting to come to life from one moment to the next. “I shot my first

documentary precisely about this with Dora Kalff<sup>4</sup> who invented the psychotherapy method of sandplay based on the theories of Carl Gustav Jung. Then my sister, Ruth Ammann, with whom I share this studio, also became a Jungian analyst and became specialized in that type of therapy: that's why all the statues are here." The statues, which seem to express their silent approval, will watch over each session of our conversation.

Originally from Zurich and born in 1931, Peter Ammann now lives in Aarau, a small town not far from the city on the Limmat. Psychologist, analyst, and director, he has worked in both film and television. He studied the cello and musicology, and his secondary studies were in the history of religion and ethnology. He holds classes and is a training analyst at the International School of Analytical Psychology Zürich.

In Switzerland he is known for his films, of which I will now mention two. *Braccia sì, uomini no* (*Workers Yes, People No*) from 1970 is a documentary about the first referendum on the Schwarzenbach law proposal, which would have reduced the percentage of foreigners in Switzerland, and thus the Italians first of all, to 10%. "A small ruling population feels itself in danger: we wanted workers, but we got people" is the statement by Max Frisch that inspired Ammann's portrait of a Confederation torn apart by a proposal that was defeated by a narrow margin. *Il treno rosso* (*The Red Train*) (1972) speaks of the flags that appeared in train windows just beyond the Swiss border, of Italians who were going home to vote, especially back to the south. It is a sort of poetic documentary of a world and its hopes for renewal. With a passion that has become historic by now, those hopes flowed, in socio-political terms, into a functional shift in the myth of William Tell as liberator. The film, screened in New York, Venice, and at the Festival dei Popoli (Festival of the Peoples) in Florence, rode the wave of Alexander Seiler, director of *Siamo italiani* (*We Are Italian*) and of the recent *Vento di settembre* (*September Wind*).

Ammann's latest work, of an entirely different genre, premiered in Zurich in 2002. Filmed completely in southern Africa, *Zauberfelsen* (*Spirits of the Rocks*) is a documentary on the Bush people (also known as *San*) and their rock paintings.<sup>5</sup>

As a director Peter Ammann was "born" at the hands of an exceptional obstetrician, Federico Fellini. In the entourage, or rather the unusual "family" that gravitated around the great Riminese di-

rector, Ammann held a unique, unofficial position. Going back to that period means for him to recall a period in which the cinema itself was something else, through the filter of an experience intimately linked to more than just his professional life. However, the essence and sense of that experience, as usually occurs in such cases, risk becoming contaminated upon talking or even more so writing about it—like what sometimes happens to antique furnishings when after years of impermeable rest a sudden, though longed-for profanation, together with air from the outside, cause them inexorably to crumble. This somewhat gloomy metaphor brings up, with voluntary exaggeration, some of the risks of the journey into the past upon which we prepare to embark.

Thus it is my job to surprise my interviewee with the help of a quote by Dario Zanelli about *Fellini Satyricon*, where it seems that on the set there was “even a psychoanalyst: Zurich native Peter Ammann, here as a volunteer, whose passion for the cinema has led him to sacrifice his first Roman patients, to interrupt—he doesn’t yet know if temporarily or definitively—his career as a doctor of the psyche.”<sup>6</sup>

#### A CONVERSATION

Giovanni Sorge: Dr. Ammann, were you really about to give up your career as an analyst?

Peter Ammann: At that time I actually never thought I would spend my life sitting in a chair listening to other people’s problems. But in truth, that’s not exactly what happened: years before I had dedicated myself to music, and when I graduated from the Jung Institute I wanted to get back into something artistic. I did not intend to open a practice immediately, as was the norm. Getting to know the world of the cinema was a way to continue on two tracks, science and art.

GS: How did you meet Fellini?

PA: When I finished my Jungian studies I wanted to make contacts in the cinema world. In Switzerland at that time there were no film schools. I had some friends in Rome, so with a vague idea of meeting Fellini, I left. I was fascinated by his films, and I knew of his great admiration for Jung. So I thought maybe there was some hope of meeting him.

GS: So you moved to Rome.

PA: It was January of 1966. A few months later I found out that

he was preparing a film. Initially I went to his office in via Nazionale with some pictures of a friend who wanted to be an actor. I hoped to meet Fellini that way, but there was no trace of him. So I decided to try to reach him by phone. His assistant answered, I introduced myself and asked if I could make an appointment. As soon as I said I was a Jungian analyst, the assistant's tone of voice suddenly changed, and I heard the words, "Please come tomorrow at five!"

The next day I found myself sitting in a room with a dozen or so pretty girls whom Fellini called in one after the other, without even seeming to notice my presence. At the end he came up to me and asked me very nicely why I had come to Rome. I said I was looking to make contacts in the film world, and that I was a Jungian analyst. I precisely remember his first question to me: "Is there a monument to Jung in Zürich?" I said no, that there wasn't, and he replied "How is that possible!" He was visibly upset. Then he excused himself, inviting me to call him in a few days.

Then, several days later Fellini asked me to go pick him up at his villa in Fregene and accompany him to the studios of Dino De Laurentiis; "that way we'll have some time to talk." He immediately wanted to know how I had come to know Jung. That was one of the things that interested him the most, but later we would have the chance to speak at length about analytical psychology. When we arrived at "Dinocittà," I thought he would send me off, but he invited me into his office. There were numerous drawings of cello cases hanging on the wall. I was a cello player, or rather ex-cello player, and I thought to myself, "How strange, I wonder why?!"—but I didn't ask for an explanation.

After that meeting Fellini left me his telephone number saying, "Call me whenever you want." I thought I should let a little time go by, but two days later he called me himself: "Would you like to come for lunch at Fregene next Sunday?" So all of a sudden I found myself at the home of the great Fellini during the golden years of Italian cinema!

GS: What was your impression of him?

PA: Oh, he was very, very nice, and he made me feel quite comfortable. We had lunch together, Giulietta Massina was there too, and after lunch he told me, "You can take a little siesta now, we'll see you later for coffee." So he led me to a room where I could rest. Later, while we were having coffee in the garden, at a certain point he murmured mysteriously to me, "You know, it really struck me

that you used to be a cello player, because ... I'm preparing a film about a cello player."

GS: A positive sign ...

PA: It certainly was a positive sign, but mostly for me I'd say! As a matter of fact he let me read the screenplay for *Mastorna* right away. He was already a bit stuck on the film, so perhaps he thought the arrival of a Jungian cello player would give him some sort of inspiration or new perspective.

GS: What did you think of *Viaggio di G. Mastorna* (*The Journey of G. Mastorna*)?

PA: That's what Fellini wanted to know the first time we spoke about it: what I felt, what I thought the message was, the heart of the film. As an analytical psychologist I told him that the screenplay had struck me profoundly. In my opinion *Mastorna* symbolized a transformational mystery in the sign of death, portraying a process of individuation in the Jungian sense. The story begins with an emergency landing in which Mastorna finds himself in the land of death. He's lost his passport, thus he's lost his identity, he's disoriented. The story basically centers around a series of events designed to help him recover his identity and his position in society. That recovery is symbolized by the end of the story in which the cello player has finally become an integral part of the orchestra once again. He finds his place there, just as each instrument has a particular sound and position in a score.

But even then, in July of 1966, he spoke to me of dreams and images that forewarned of his imminent crisis. For example, he described a disturbing image of a hanged man, immersed up to his waist in the waters of a fountain. I couldn't help thinking of the alchemical process of immersion in the bath followed by *putrefactio* often mentioned by Jung. The decomposition of things makes rebirth or new life possible. Nonetheless, at that time it was hard for me to perceive that Fellini himself would experience, or shall we say suffer, a psychological event of that sort.

GS: What kind of image was it?

PA: A hypnagogic image. That's how he defined the images or phantasmagorias that came frequently to him, I suppose during a siesta or when he was half-asleep. I managed to note down many of them, for the most part inauspicious during that period.

For certain when I started to frequent him, the airplane and the immense reproduction of the cathedral in Cologne had already

been built at the studios of Dino De Laurentiis, known as “Dinocittà”. Shooting was scheduled to begin in October. Everything was almost ready, but Fellini was already in a crisis over the project.

GS: There is a symbolic relationship between *8 1/2* and *The Journey of G. Mastorna*. Fellini spoke of the former, released in 1963, as the story of a film that he never succeeded in making. Thus it seems like an allusion, or even some sort of prophecy. Then I think of the similarities between the skeleton of the spaceship in *8 1/2* and the cathedral ghosts in the film never made.

PA: There are affinities between the endings as well. In both the symbol of a circle appears. In *Mastorna* it consists in the semicircle of the orchestra, while in *8 1/2* it recalls a circus arena. This second epilogue though, which finds all the characters together, would almost seem an artifice in respect to the film, a final solution pulled from the magician’s hat.

GS: Yet one year earlier, in the summer of 1965, Fellini had not thought of an ending for *Mastorna*, and in his letter to De Laurentiis he described a scene that would have led to something else entirely, something more “definitive.” A turn in a mountain trail and a great, immobile clear sky. All the obstacles have been overcome, she who has accompanied him must now leave him, Mastorna is alone. The sky and solitude, and there was no way to end it. He would have had to go metaphorically beyond death. *8 1/2* somehow prefigures that situation.

PA: In a sense, what Fellini described in *8 1/2* actually happened when he tried to make *Mastorna*. *The Journey of G. Mastorna* is a rebellion against society and at the same time a redemption from that very society in the search for his own individual center. Something more profound on the part of his conscience forced him to make other choices. It thus proved impossible to represent individuation in that way. In other words, that idea led him before a closed door.

You know, having met him at such a particular time in his life allowed me to get to know him very intimately. The crisis that had already begun culminated around mid-September when it seems that he made himself rather scarce. I saw him fairly regularly though. At that time I had a convertible Mercedes from the 1950s that he really liked, and he often asked me to accompany him to various places. On 13 September 1966, we were headed towards the Forums, and he asked me to stop. Only later would I realize that

he was having a much more serious crisis than I had understood at the time. He tossed an I Ching coin onto the carpet, asking what he should do in that situation: make the film or not? He got hexagram 36, "Darkening of the Light." Quite discouraged, he told me it was definitely negative.

Based on what he told me, that same day he wrote the famous letter to Dino De Laurentiis, in which he stated that he couldn't make the film. Then he went to a card reader who said he should continue, but he still couldn't get rid of his doubts and uncertainties.



Fig. 1. On the set of *Satyricon*. From left to right: Federico Fellini, Peter Ammann, Liliana Betti, assistant.<sup>7</sup>

The next day he told me of a dream he'd had that was unquestionably inauspicious and particularly pointed. There was a train that left at 8:30; actually it had just left, and Fellini was trying to catch it on the fly. He grabbed onto the moving train, only to find himself in a desperate situation, unable to get either on or off. He could see someone inside the train: it was exactly the same actor who had dubbed the voice of the producer in *8 1/2*.

GS: That's a very specific detail.

PA: That dream definitely constituted the deciding factor that led him to send the letter to the producer. It accentuated and con-

firmed Fellini's fear of repeating with *Mastorna* the same story he'd already told in *8 1/2*. It was what he feared and what upset him the most. In his exact words, he felt like he was "using a source from the past. My heart and mind tell me I should not make this film, but things follow their own course." Who knows if perhaps his fear didn't hide the feeling that he would repeat *in his own life* the situation in the film?

Signs of an impasse and inauspicious dreams tormented him: one night he woke up suddenly with the vision of a huge dark wall that he had to cross; on September 17th he dreamed that he was staggering around on a ship about to sink.

GS: The letter to Dino caused the scandal to explode.

PA: It was a very dramatic moment. Everything was ready. Millions had been spent, the production machine was up and running, the actors' contracts were signed. Dino De Laurentiis' reaction was an attempt to have Fellini's possessions sequestered.

Yet Fellini did not abandon the idea for that film. According to my notes from January-February 1967 everything still seemed open. Indeed preparations for *Satyricon* were to begin following the filming of *Mastorna*. However, in regard to the latter, he kept getting the same response: "darkening of the light."

GS: His unexpected sickness in April of 1967 stopped him.

PA: Exactly. But here too I should say only temporarily, because later he would go back and forth again about the project. With *Mastorna*, his fear of repeating *8 1/2* was joined by the upsetting and persistent feeling of entering into a prohibited realm of death, of religion: perhaps he felt overly ambitious and he was terrified of not measuring up to the task.

During that period he felt as if he had lost his vocation as a filmmaker. He suffered from the lengthy months of inactivity. He felt tired, weary; precisely because he had taken a hit in his creativity, he felt incapable of making decisions. Once he told me, "I'm not making films anymore, I'm losing my profession. I've always lived to tell stories, never without that scope, that motor."

Despite all that he started shooting again in the fall, not *Mastorna*, but *Toby Dammit*, an episode for a film by three filmmakers *Tre passi nel delirio (Spirits of the Dead)*, and later on a sort of documentary for American television, *Block-notes di un regista (Fellini: A Director's Notebook)*.

GS: *Toby Dammit* also has to do with death. “I tried to make fun of myself”—is how he describes the episode—“to throw myself to the sea, destroy myself. To exaggerate the Fellini style until it became parody, grotesque: so there would be no turning back.”

PA: It’s a goodbye story, taken from Edgar Allan Poe, we could say a sort of suicide. Something struck me distinctly during the filming of *Toby Dammit*. Fellini gave the impression of feeling a sort of antipathy or even contempt for the world, and especially the film world. Whereas during *Satyricon* I found him much more relaxed, untroubled: his face, as well as the atmosphere on the set. The sensation of disgust that emanated from *Toby Dammit* had disappeared. Indeed, that film seemed to reflect his state of mind. An actor wins an award and receives a sports car; nauseated, he leaves the ceremony, racing in the car towards the abyss of death.

GS: With that film you began working as Fellini’s assistant.

PA: Yes. When he started filming again after his lengthy crisis, I told him that I hadn’t just come to talk to him about Jung, but also to learn the work of a filmmaker. I already knew many of his crew members by then. I too had become, how shall I say, a part of the “family.” When he learned of my interest for the cinema, he immediately discouraged me from attending film school since I was already thirty-five. I needed practical experience, so he told me, “Come to the set and stand as close as you can to the camera.” And that’s what I did, without having a precise role. Sometimes, when he couldn’t find a word in English I would help him, basically small things. That was for the episode of *Toby Dammit*.

During *Satyricon* I instead volunteered as his assistant during the entire making of the film. It was a very fascinating and enriching experience. During that phase my relationship with him inevitably changed in respect to the clearly privileged situation that had existed in previous months. Fellini was extremely concentrated on the film, so that didn’t leave us much time for car rides or long talks. On the other hand, my main intention was to learn to be a director.

GS: In your opinion, what position does *Satyricon* hold within Fellini’s filmography?

PA: I think that the work bears witness to a reversal in his artistic development, but perhaps on a personal level as well. He told the story of a man’s midlife crisis in *8 1/2*, and of a woman’s in *Giulietta degli spiriti* (*Juliet of the Spirits*). They are very personal films, in-

spired in part by his life and in part by the world in which he lived. Then, somehow with *Mastorna* he found himself at an impasse, in a cul-de-sac.

GS: To make it would have been tempting fate, he told Renzo Canestrari. There were very high expectations for the film.

PA: But it presented itself to him as a point of no return. Differently, *Satyricon* no longer has to do with his personal life, it tells of two thousand years earlier. It lacks a pivotal character to identify with; it was as if Fellini had to distance himself from his own problems. Forced by his destiny, he had to turn towards a more collective, shall we say more archetypal dimension. *Satyricon* is a representation of ancient Rome, a journey through a mythological,



Fig. 2. On the set of *Satyricon*. In the middle: Federico Fellini, behind on his left Peter Ammann.

pre-Christian world. It was a sort of redemption for him, inasmuch as he managed to free himself from the oppression of a culture strongly marked by the influence of the Catholic church.

Thus a violent liberation as well. Recently, during a seminar at the Zürich-Küsnacht Jung Institute on that issue, a number of participants couldn't bear certain parts of the film, which they felt were excessively cruel.

GS: “Under the sign of extraneousness” lay the reasoning behind *Fellini Satyricon*. He wanted the dubbing to be “impersonal, cold, like the voices on radio newscasts.” And for the choice of the characters, “people who seem as though they’ve breathed different air, eaten different food, ingested poison,” “faces inhabited by other thoughts,” thus alien.

PA: Monstrous faces, too, ah ... He had to fight continuously, he said, to resist identifying himself with people, with his characters. He consciously tried to create a distance between himself and the actors, who were in large part English, American ...

GS: Thus, in your opinion, there was a detachment, a catharsis in respect to the past?

PA: Oh yes, definitely. I think this work constituted a liberation for Fellini. I’m truly convinced of it. I would say almost a rebirth, since among other things his illness caused a serious risk to his life.

In July of 1967 I jotted down one of his hypnagogic images, also present in Kezich’s biography<sup>8</sup> though in a slightly different version. He saw a headless man at the wheel of a car with many crying children sitting inside. Then two hands appeared that pulled the children out of the car to safety.

GS: How do you interpret that image?

PA: Decapitation can represent an immolation of the head, the organ that *makes* a director, or one who consciously decides. At a certain point Fellini had to let go of his hold, he could no longer make what he wanted, or what he had in his head. It seems to me that his unconscious was suggesting a sort of sacrifice, as if to say, “You have to give up your head to save the children,” meaning the “new life.” And that’s what he did, acting differently in respect to what he had foreseen. And I must add: with much toil and no lack of resistance.

GS: Thus this “decapitation” is central in the passing from *Mastorna* to *Satyricon*?

PA: Yes. We must remember that *Mastorna* is a story about death, or rather, a story about the loss of identity. Which Fellini was however incapable of telling. He had to pass over, leave behind him a certain personal identity: the Fellini in *La dolce vita*, *8 1/2*, and *Juliet of the Spirits* became the director of *Satyricon*, of a mythological story. I don’t mean to say that he had resolved his personal problems, but loosely quoting Jung, “We do not solve our problems, we get over them.”

GS: And we see them in another light.

PA: Afterwards, he didn't stop telling about his life, his Italy. For example, *Amarcord* is a film about even personal memories. But that sort of brother or alter ego, like Guido in *8 1/2* or *Mastorna*, with whom he could mirror or identify himself, had disappeared.

*Satyricon* is a more choral, collective work, and in that sense it represents a strong detachment. Thus in the passing from *Mastorna*, never made, to *Satyricon*, I see a profound change, a turning point.

GS: According to Fellini, the main reason why the film was never made revolved around his illness. "Perhaps I got sick because I didn't feel capable of doing it." And he added, "I had the suspicion that the film was going to kill me." How did you experience that period?

PA: I don't know all the details. I know that he had to be suddenly taken to the hospital and that it was very serious. If I'm right in seeing a turning point in his life as a director and perhaps even as a human being, then we can say that the illness was entirely part of



Fig. 3. On the set of *Satyricon*. From left to right: Peter Ammann, Federico Fellini, Alain Cuny, French actor.

the crisis. He felt that he had gotten very close to death. And at a certain point, he thought: I lived through that experience, thus I feel authorized to make a film about death.

GS: But that's not what happened, and with *A Director's Notebook* he would later return to certain themes.

PA: I would rather say that with that brief film he wanted to tell about the passing from *Mastorna* to *Satyricon*, which was already under preparation at that point. The crisis was already over.

I'll always remember the moment in which Fellini restaged Mastroianni's screen test for the part of the cello player Giuseppe Mastorna. He consciously wanted to call up the time before the crisis emerged. It was moving for me to hand Marcello Mastroianni the cello to play. Fellini wanted to recreate that painful situation in which he realized that the person who was often his alter ego, just like any other actor who tried out for the part for that matter, could not play Mastorna. Thus in *A Director's Notebook*, rather than playing music, the cello symbolically emits scratchy noises.

That television film was a sort of exercise, a period of reflection or conscious distancing and passing. A suffered passing in any case. We can't forget that Fellini was forty-eight then. I remember once at a lunch that Mastroianni also attended, Fellini told him about a certain moment just before that had made him realize all of a sudden that time was passing. He gave the impression the he was realizing, who knows, maybe for the first time, that he too was growing older.

GS: The death of Bernhard<sup>9</sup> in June of 1965 seems to have played an important role in the genesis of *Mastorna*. The extraordinary lucidity with which the German analyst lived his last days was that exceptional man's farewell teaching to his loved ones, as well as the confirmation of a rare link between thought and life.

PA: It could be that the passing of the man who in a sense saved Fellini gave him a new direction, a fresh view; and it could be that the idea for the project came forth from that sudden loss. In any case, it is a singular coincidence that right after Bernhard's death Fellini started developing a story about a disoriented man who is forced to find his way by himself, or rather *in* himself.

Bernhard had become a spiritual guide for Fellini, and Fellini felt suddenly lost, I'd almost say orphaned. It's likely that with a film about death he wanted to deal with that experience, in order to find himself again.

GS: Did he ever speak to you about Bernhard?

PA: Rarely. I had the impression that there was a very intimate spiritual bond. You know, we could also add that there was a gen-

eration between them, which may have made it easier for Fellini to project in a paternal sense. I was on the other end, eleven years younger than Fellini, so I could have been his “Jungian little brother.”

From the very first time that I accompanied him to “Dinocittà,” however, he spoke to me of his experience with psychoanalysis. Toward the end of the filming of *La strada* he fell into psychological difficulty. In his own words, which I wrote down at the time, it was “a psychosis that caused his inclination towards paranormal and psychic phenomena to grow, also in the form of dangerous experiences.” The Freudian analyst Emilio Servadio somehow helped him to finish the film. He later noticed though that that type of therapy did not satisfy him. In Bernhard he found instead a psychological attitude “open to life, without too rationalist or narrow an approach.” The Berlin doctor allowed him to go over the morbid aspects of his interest in the paranormal in the way most suited for Fellini, or by “putting it in check without suffocating the enchantment and the magic.”

From his words I also understood how his meeting with Jung through Bernhard was fundamental. Bernhard was his go-between, and behind Bernhard stood Jung, an almost mythical person. Something that he would not however remain.

In March of 1967 I took a copy of Jung’s famous interview for the BBC<sup>10</sup> to Rome. Fellini was very impressed by it. A few days later on the phone, almost jokingly, I asked him if he’d had a dream after watching the film. He described a hypnagogic image to me: he was under water with a large fish, almost his own size. He killed it, cutting it open with a knife. The fish bled profusely. A voice asked him why he killed it, and he answered, “To make a canoe out of it.” He immediately thought the dream had a negative meaning, linking it to the myth of Jonah, even though he wasn’t inside the fish.

A fish usually represents some part of the unconscious, and in my opinion the fact that he wanted to make a boat out of it was positive, because it was somehow a vehicle that he could use.

GS: What was his position towards your interpretations?

PA: I can’t give a clear answer to that. There was, how can I say, something fleeting about him in that sense. But I don’t want to, nor can I interpret that attitude. It’s important for me to specify here that I was not Fellini’s analyst. In any case, describing and interpreting dreams is a very delicate matter, and I would never permit myself

to disclose facts or impressions regarding his personal life. What I have to say is always related to his work, his creative dimension.

In May, after watching the interview a second time, Fellini was extremely shaken by a disturbing detail in one of his dreams. In it Jung himself, or rather “Fellini’s Jung,” was blind. The critical breadth of that message hit him quite hard. Anything but a visionary, or the so-to-say “archetypal” figure of him who interprets dreams, Jung appeared blind to him.

On that occasion Fellini observed that dreams had given him many warnings. Bernhard too had told him many things, but he had never realized any of it. Fellini was no doubt exaggerating, but I



Fig. 4. On the set of *Satyricon*. From left to right: Liliana Betti, assistant, Federico Fellini, Norma Giacchero, script, Peter Ammann.

got the impression that his attitude toward his dreams changed after his illness: it was as if he began living them more consciously, as if they were somehow “opening his eyes.”

GS: Let’s go back to *Satyricon*. Is there an episode that you particularly remember?

PA: There’s a beautiful scene, the one with *The villa of suicides*.

A new Caesar has come to power, following the assassination of his predecessor, and an aristocratic Roman couple takes their own lives.

GS: It resembles the suicide of Prof. Steiner in *La dolce vita*. Two dramatic, unexpected hitches in the flow of the story.

PA: Indeed. Amidst the many lascivious, lustful characters in *Satyricon*, all of a sudden this episode occurs. During shooting you could feel an almost unreal calm. They say goodbye to their children and send them away, the servants leave, and finally, they take their lives. The set was permeated by a dense and tremendous placidness.



Fig. 5. On the set of *Satyricon*. From left to right: Martin Potter, English actor, Peter Ammann, Federico Fellini.

Fellini was very different from the well-known Fellini, he actually seemed like some sort of stoic wise man.

I must add here though, that the “myth” of a haphazard Fellini, who often decides things at the last minute and leaves a lot of room for chance, is not something I experienced in the least. Maybe he behaved like that on other films, but as far as my experience is concerned, he showed an incredible seriousness and precision that co-existed with a very peaceful and often playful atmosphere on the set. I remember an upbeat mood, with Fellini and the guys cutting up. That also happens because of the slow rhythm of the cinema, there’s time to kill. Essentially though, he was very serious and committed, there was no indecision.

Once he lost his temper in front of everyone. It was during shooting of Trimalcione’s dinner. The piece was extremely complex. At a certain point someone was supposed to brandish a knife, but the handle wouldn’t stay put. They brought another one, but it still wasn’t right. Neither was the third. “You’re just a bunch of dummies”—he yelled like a madman—“damn you!” And he walked out, leaving us all in shock. Then the executive producer came and sent everyone home; it was three in the afternoon. The next morning things were a bit tense, no one could disturb the Maestro. But a few days later he was back to himself.

GS: What position does the feminine play in *Satyricon*?

PA: A central position without a doubt. The enchantress Enotea holds a prominent role.

And what a difference there is between Enotea in *Satyricon* and Saraghina in *8 1/2!* Like a voyeur, a young Guido spies upon the fleshy opulence of the dancing prostitute, and we perceive a collegiate Fellini recalling his traumatic encounter with female sexuality. Differently, the scene with the equally fleshy enchantress Enotea, who heals Encolpio’s impotence, goes beyond any sort of Catholic morality, reflecting the psychology of the Great Mother that characterized Mediterranean culture. Moreover, it recalls the buxom figures of certain prehistoric statues that symbolized the fertility of woman and of the earth.

In my opinion, when Encolpio throws himself into the enchantress’s arms towards the end of the film, there is an evident allusion to the cult of the Great Mother. That religion, of Middle Eastern origins, took hold with the Romans following the collapse of the Greek gods.

GS: Do you think it was a conscious reference?

PA: I couldn't say. Today however, we can feel the lack of a Great Goddess, but it's not just a problem of today. It could already be felt at the fall of the Roman empire. It's interesting to note how and at what point in time the empire opened itself to the cult of the Great Mediterranean Mother. It occurred with the invasion of Hannibal during the Second Punic War. An epidemic threatened the soldiers, which was a clear sign of the gods' displeasure. After consulting the Sibylline Books the oracle said, "The foreign enemy will be defeated only when Ida, Great Mother of the mountains, is brought to Rome." In Ovid's version: "The Mother is missing. I order you, Romans, to go and seek out the Mother." Thus the Romans went in search of the divinity that could oppose the powerful protectress of Hannibal, the great Carthaginian goddess Tanit. That divinity was missing from the Roman pantheon. Ida, Great Mother of the mountains, Cybele to the Romans, was received triumphantly into the heart of the empire in April of 204 B.C. The following year Hannibal left Italy, and in 202 Rome won the Second Punic War. At this point it's important to remember that when Petronius wrote *The Satyricon*, a number of cults had formed around female gods.

GS: What is the meaning of the end of *Fellini Satyricon*?

PA: I find Encolpio's departure for Africa at the end of the film essential. What's more, in Petronius there is also a departure for Africa, thus the transposition is faithful to the book. Fellini however gives it new meaning. In my opinion you can feel all Fellini's hope in that young, slim black man who jumps about and laughs with great happiness. Hope for the new, an opening towards unknown lands. A hope that he places, with a certain optimism, in the new generations. That was the time of flower power, of the hippies, movements he really identified with.

GS: Africa as a sort of rebirth then.

PA: The famous saying by Pliny the Elder comes to mind: "Always something new [is born] from Africa." And on that I'd like to make a personal consideration. In the sixties I would hear people in Switzerland, and sometimes even in Italy, say jokingly that Africa began in Rome. My four years in the capital and my meeting with Fellini were, as a Swiss native, truly the discovery of a new land for me. Moreover, with *Satyricon* Fellini transported me, and everyone else who lived that "adventure" with him, into another space and time.

I was far from imagining at that time that, almost twenty years later, a series of circumstances would take me to the real Africa, and South Africa to be precise, to hold classes in Jungian psychology. For me, like Italy before it, that was an opening towards an unknown world. To shoot my last film, *Zauberfelsen*, I took another trip into an entirely different culture and society.

It was as if I had immersed myself in an even more remote era in the history of humankind. With the Bush people it almost seemed to me as if I got to touch an ancient phase of human history, because they are, or rather they represent the direct descendants of our ancestors. For hundreds and thousands of years, populations of hunters and gatherers lived in a sort of continuous present during the era prior to agriculture and to the relatively rapid development that led through Greek and Roman civilization to our day.

I would like to finish by saying that the end of *Fellini Satyricon* reminds me of a saying I read somewhere in Africa: "Ask not what you can bring to Africa, but what Africa can bring to you."

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Editor's Note: This article has been published twice previously in two Italian journals. It first appeared as "Un analista svizzero a Cinecittà; Del *Mastorna*, del *Satyricon* e la sua Africa; Peter Ammann racconta," in *Fellini Amarcord*, the official journal of the Fellini Foundation, Rimini, June 2004. It was also published as "L'uomo dei sogni, una conversazione con Peter Ammann," in Moretti and Vitali, eds., *Anima*, Bergamo, Italy, 2004. For purposes of clarification, this translation has some minor modifications of the original text as well as some added endnotes that were made in consultation with the author and Dr. Ammann. The author thanks Dr. Vittorio Boarini, Director of the Fellini Foundation, for his permission to publish the English translation of this article in the **LIBRARY JOURNAL**. The editor also wishes particularly to acknowledge the good offices of the translator, Debra Christie, in preparing this article.

<sup>2</sup> Federico Fellini, *Fare un film*, Torino, Einaudi, 1980, 136.

<sup>3</sup> Interview by Manlio Cancogni from August 1968 for *Fiera Letteraria*, partially reproduced in: Dario Zanelli (ed.), *Fellini Satyricon*, Bologna, Edizioni Cappelli, 1969, 28.

<sup>4</sup> A student of C. G. Jung and D. T. Suzuki, and founder of Sandplay Therapy. See Dora Kalf, *Sandspiel; seine therapeutische Wirkung auf die Psyche*, Zürich und Stuttgart, Rascher Verlag, 1966.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Ammann says of the film: "What is it about the Bushpeople—also known as the San—that touches something deep within us? Why are we so fascinated by their world? With these questions in mind we set off on a journey to South Africa, Botswana and Namibia. The extraordinary rock paintings of the Bushpeople lead us back into the world of our ancestors, the hunters and gatherers, into a past that we no longer know. They lead us to the spirits of the rocks, rocks that conjure up the early man within us, which—externally at least—has long been so repressed and even destroyed. Yet our journey continues beyond the rock paintings and takes us to the Bushpeople who are still alive today, altogether about 100,000 in southern Africa. They share with us their tales and myths. They invite us to take part in their rituals and healing dance, which have been handed down from generation to generation. In so doing, the Bushpeople restore our links with a way of life that we have lost. The South African anthropologists Patricia Vinnicombe (author of the groundbreaking book

*People of the Eland*) and Frans Prins, the American folklorist and development worker Megan Biesele (co-founder of the Kalahari Peoples Fund), as well as the German archeologists Tilman and Marie Lenssen-Erz are leading us through the film expounding their approach to and personal interest in the culture of the Bushpeople.”

<sup>6</sup> Dario Zanelli, “Dal pianeta Roma,” in D. Zanelli (ed.), 37.

<sup>7</sup> Editor’s Note: The photographs in this article are chosen from the collection of Peter Ammann. To honor the tenth anniversary of Fellini’s death they were shown in a special exhibition, organized by Giovanni Sorge, at the Italian Cultural Institute of Zürich (Dr. Marina Mezzasalma, Director). It was called *The Mythic World of Fellini: Snapshots from Satyricon*, and it took place from October 31 to December 26, 2003.

<sup>8</sup> Tullio Kezich, *Federico Fellini, la vita e i film*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 2003.

<sup>9</sup> Ernst Bernhard (Berlin 1886–Rome 1965) was the first Jungian analyst in Italy, and many Italian analysts were his patients. He had both Freudian and Jungian analyses in Berlin, where he worked as a pediatrician. He did personal analytic work with Jung and with Toni Wolff in Zürich during the winter of 1935–36 before going into exile in Italy in 1937. He spent ten months in an internment camp in Calabria, 1940–41.

According to Gianfranco Angelucci, Fellini’s friend and close collaborator, writer, and co-author of the screenplay of *Intervista*, Fellini considered Bernhard to be his “true spiritual guide.” (G. Angelucci, personal communication to G. Sorge.) At Bernhard’s suggestion, Fellini wrote and drew his dreams, producing the famous *Libro dei sogni (Book of Dreams)*, which the Fellini Foundation in Rimini will publish in part or entire.

Editor’s Note: Over the years it has been thought and said that Bernhard was Fellini’s analyst. Mr. Sorge states, however, that so far no historical documentation has been discovered that would support this assertion. He suggests that their relationship may have been an “unorthodox” kind of analysis rather than a formally boundaried one. The question invites further inquiry and discussion.

A collection of Bernhard’s writings was published posthumously in Italian as *Mitobiografia* (Milano, Adelphi, 1969) and in German as *Mythobiographie* (Hélène Erba-Tissot [ed.], Stuttgart, Ernst Klett Verlag, 1974). Dr. Bernhard’s particular interests included the relationship between Judaism and Christianity, Hasidism, Eastern religions, the individual/collective dynamic (from which he developed his idea of “mythobiography” as well as others of his cardinal concepts such as entelechy, the “pseudo shadow,” and the fourth dimension). Bernhard also took a profound interest in the I Ching, astrology, and palmistry. See also A. Carotenuto, *Jung e la cultura italiana*, Rome, Astrolabio Ubaldini, 1970; and G. Sorge (ed.), “1934–1959, Lettere tra E. Bernhard e C. G. Jung,” supplement to *Rivista di psicologia analitica*, Roma, no. 64, 2001.

<sup>10</sup> *Face to Face*, interview of C. G. Jung by John Freeman, Küsnacht, Zürich, 1959.

#### ABSTRACT

Giovanni Sorge, “A Swiss Analyst in Cinecittà: Peter Ammann speaks of *Mastorna*, *Fellini Satyricon* and Africa,” in *THE SAN FRANCISCO JUNG INSTITUTE LIBRARY JOURNAL*, 2006, 25:2, 1–21. Peter Ammann, after having graduated from the C. G. Jung Institute of Zürich in 1965, spent four years in Rome, where he met Federico Fellini. Fellini had become a great admirer of Jung’s ideas through the profound influence of Dr. Ernst Bernhard, the first Jungian analyst in Italy. In this interview by Giovanni Sorge, Ammann tells us about how he met Fellini at a time when the Italian film director was in the middle of a serious creative crisis. Later on, during the production of *Fellini Satyricon*, Ammann became one of his assistants. Though Ammann was not his analyst, Fellini shared numerous dreams with him that throw a highly interesting light on a period of Fellini’s life that marked a turning point in his career as a film director. Ammann later became a filmmaker in his own right.

**KEY WORDS**

Creativity crisis, dreams and creativity, artists and analysis, Ernst Bernhard, Dora Kalf, *Mastorna*, Bush people, San, pre-Christian myth, Federico Fellini, *Fellini Satyricon*.