

Paganism And Christianity In The Films Of Federico Fellini Classical Receptions

Federico Fellini, one of the most influential Italian filmmakers, is renowned for his highly imaginative and visually striking films. Fellini's works often explore deep philosophical and religious themes, blending elements of paganism and Christianity in a captivating manner. In this article, we will delve into the world of Fellini's films and analyze the profound connections between paganism, Christianity, and classical receptions.

The Pagan Influence

Fellini exhibits a profound fascination with paganism throughout his filmmaking career. His films often feature characters and settings that allude to ancient Roman and Greek mythologies. The lavish and decadent lifestyles of his characters, reminiscent of the Roman Empire's excesses, highlight the recurring pagan themes in his works.

One of Fellini's most iconic films, "La Dolce Vita" (1960), captures the essence of paganism. The film follows the life of a journalist amidst the glamorous and hedonistic lifestyle of Rome's social elite. The images of lavish parties, beautiful women, and indulgent indulgences are reminiscent of ancient bacchanals and pagan festivities.

Fellini's Eternal Rome: Paganism and Christianity in the Films of Federico Fellini (Classical Receptions in Twentieth-Century Writing)

by Alessandro Carrera (Kindle Edition)

★★★★★ 5 out of 5



During the filming of "Roma" (1972), Fellini explores the history of the Eternal City, intertwining past and present. Through a series of vignettes, he showcases the pagan origins of Rome, with scenes dedicated to Roman festivals like Saturnalia and Lupercalia. These pagan references immerse the audience in the rich history of the city while challenging traditional Christian narratives.

The Christian Allegories

While paganism plays a significant role in Fellini's films, Christianity is also intricately woven into the narratives. Fellini often juxtaposes pagan and Christian elements, creating thought-provoking allegories that blur the lines between the two belief systems.

In "Amarcord" (1973), a semi-autobiographical film set in Fellini's hometown, the Christian traditions of Catholicism are portrayed alongside pagan festivities. The annual winter festival exemplifies this fusion as it involves both religious processions and pagan rituals, highlighting the director's exploration of the coexistence of these contrasting belief systems.

"Nights of Cabiria" (1957) offers another example of Fellini's exploration of Christian themes. The film follows the journey of a naive prostitute in search of

love and redemption. Cabiria's experiences mirror the Christian concept of suffering and eventual salvation, highlighting the profound influence of Christian narratives in Fellini's storytelling.

Fellini's Classical Receptions

Fellini's fascination with classical receptions adds another layer of complexity to his films. He draws inspiration from ancient literature, art, and philosophy, incorporating classical themes into his visual storytelling.

In "Satyricon" (1969), Fellini adapts Petronius' ancient Roman novel, creating a visually stunning depiction of decadence and debauchery. The film captures the essence of ancient pagan rituals and explores the dark side of humanity, all while enveloped in the grandeur of classical motifs.

"Fellini-Satyricon" (1969) is yet another prime example of the director's classical receptions. This film adapts fragments from the Roman poet and philosopher Titus Lucretius Carus' work, "De Rerum Natura" (On the Nature of Things). Fellini's interpretation delves into philosophical themes such as the pursuit of pleasure and the fear of death, embodying the spirit of classical literature while engaging the audience's contemplation.

The Impact and Legacy

Fellini's unique blend of paganism, Christianity, and classical receptions in his films continues to captivate audiences to this day. His exploration of philosophical and religious themes challenges conventional narratives, encouraging viewers to question and reflect upon their own beliefs.

By blending elements from different belief systems and historical periods, Fellini's films transcend time and offer a timeless appeal. They serve as a testament to

the enduring power of mythology, religion, and art in shaping human experiences and understanding.

In , the films of Federico Fellini provide a captivating journey into the realms of paganism, Christianity, and classical receptions. Through his masterful storytelling and visually stunning cinematography, Fellini weaves together these seemingly disparate elements, creating a rich tapestry of philosophical, religious, and historical allusions. By exploring the nuances between these belief systems, Fellini's films challenge and enrich our understanding of humanity's deeper complexities.



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*** Winner of the 2019 Flaiano Prize in the category Italian Studies ***

In Fellini's Eternal Rome, Alessandro Carrera explores the co-existence and conflict of paganism and Christianity in the works of Federico Fellini. By combining source analysis, cultural history and jargon-free psychoanalytic film theory, Carrera introduces the reader to a new appreciation of Fellini's work.

Life-affirming Franciscanism and repressive Counter-Reformation dogmatism live side by side in Fellini's films, although he clearly tends toward the former and

resents the latter. The fascination with pre-Christian Rome shines through *La Dolce Vita* and finds its culmination in *Fellini-Satyricon*, the most audacious attempt to imagine what the West would be if Christianity had never replaced classical Rome. Minimal clues point toward a careful, extremely subtle use of classical texts and motifs.

Fellini's interest in the classics culminates in *Olympus*, a treatment of Hesiod's *Theogony* for a never-realized TV miniseries on Greek mythology, here introduced for the first time to an English-speaking readership. Fellini's recurrent dream of the Mediterranean Goddess is shaped by the phantasmatic projection of paganism that Christianity created as its convenient Other. His characters long for a “maternal space” where they will be protected from mortality and left free to roam. Yet Fellini shows how such maternal space constantly fails, not because the Church has erased it, but because the utopia of unlimited enjoyment is a self-defeating fantasy.



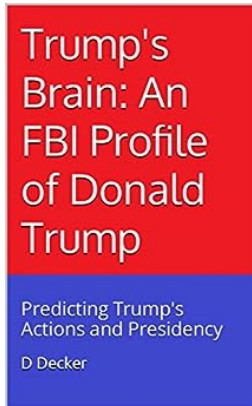
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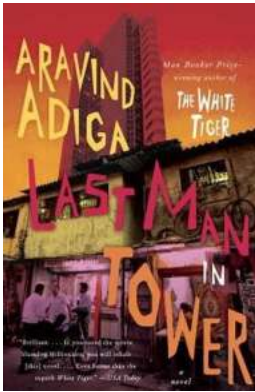
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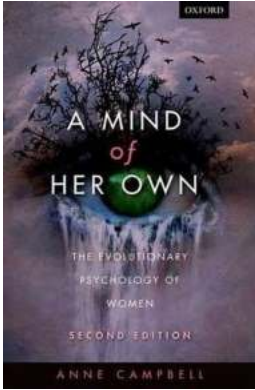
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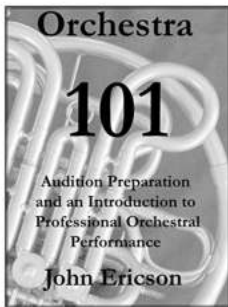
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