

FEDERICO FELLINI AND HOMER: PARALLELS AND INTERSECTIONS

ALEXANDER A. SINITSYN

The Dostoevsky Russian Christian Academy for the Humanities
aa.sinizin@mail.ru

ABSTRACT. This essay is an outgrowth of the topic considered in the previous articles devoted to the image of ancient and modern Rome in Federico Fellini's films, in which an attempt to analyse several Homeric motifs in *Fellini Satyricon* (1969) was made. The Italian film director acknowledged that he had dreamed to make a film based on the European 'Book of the Books', Homer's duology — the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* — about the heroes of the Trojan cycle of myths. Other coincidences in Fellini and Homer constitute the object of this study. Deliberate? Fortuitous? Archetypic? Fanciful? The very wording of the topic — *Fellini Satyricon* as Fellini's *Iliad* — is provocative. The article identifies and discusses the parallels and intersections in the works of the two great masters — the Ancient Greek poet and the classic of Italian cinematograph, who lived almost three millennia apart.

KEYWORDS: Homer, *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, Federico Fellini, *Fellini Satyricon*, Achilles, Odysseus, Patroclus, Encolpius, Ascylos, *ethos*, the hero's wrath, lover/frater, Trojan cycle of myths, Ancient Rome, Italian cinematograph, leitmotifs, topoi.

1. Introduction

This essay continues the research started in the previous publications on the images of the ancient and modern Rome in the works of Federico Fellini¹. They attempted to analyse certain inter-contextual parallels in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, written by the legendary Homer at the beginning of the Archaic age of the Greek

¹ See the publications: Sinitsyn 2018a; Sinitsyn 2018c; Sinitsyn 2019a; Sinitsyn 2019b; Sinitsyn 2019c; Sinitsyn 2021a; Sinitsyn 2021b; Sinitsyn 2021c; Sinitsyn 2021d; Sinitsyn 2021e. See also about F. Fellini and antiquity: Sinitsyn 2020; Sinitsyn 2022; Sinitsyn 2024a; Sinitsyn 2024b.

history, and those in the *Fellini Satyricon*². This classical film loosely based on Petronius' *Satyricon* (1st century AD) and numerous other monuments of ancient literature³ was made in 1968–1969 and presented in early September 1969 at the 30th Venice International Film Festival.

The previous publications focused on the general themes of the Ancient Roman and the new *Satyricons*: heroes' peregrinations (Homer's Odysseus, and Encolpius in Petronius and in Fellini), the Banquet of Trimalchio theme (in Petronius and Fellini), the motif of gods' wrath conjugate with that of Odysseus' peregrinations (in Homer's epic and — controversially — in Petronius' book, the theme of the artful hero, the image(s) of labyrinth/labyrinths (in Fellini's film), the puzzle structure of the works (those of Fellini and Petronius), and others⁴.

This article examines other concurrences found in Fellini and Homer. Are they deliberate? Fortuitous? Plausible? Archetypal? Fanciful (either by the film director or by the author of this article)? The article highlights the parallels in the works of great masters living almost three millennia apart: in the epic written by the Ancient Greek genius and in the 'historiographic' film by the classic of Italian cinema⁵.

Despite the paradoxical juxtaposition of the modern film and Homer's epic, I believe that this approach is viable. Here I shall refer to the analytical comparison made in the books by American experts in Russian philology and history of Russian literature, Frederick T. Griffiths and Stanley J. Rabinowitz on classical epic (Homer and Virgil) and the Russian novel (from Gogol to Pasternak)⁶; of special interest is the chapter "Tolstoy and Homer" on the *War and Peace* as a "Russian *Iliad*"⁷. It may seem that there are greater reasons to find traces of Homeric influence in Lev N. Tolstoy's Russian grand epic *War and Peace* about the Great War. *FS*, in spite

² *Fellini Satyricon*, hereinafter referred to as *FS*. Screenplay by Federico Fellini and Bernardino Zapponi with Brunello Rondi; directed by Federico Fellini; produced by Alberto Grimaldi; cinematography by Giuseppe Rotunno; music by Nino Rota; starring Martin Potter (Encolpio), Hiram Keller (Ascolto), Max Born (Giton), Mario Romagnoli (Trimalchio), Salvo Randone (Eumolpo), Magali Noël (Fortunata), Alain Cuny (Lichas) and others. France — Italy: Les Productions Artistes Associés, Produzioni Europee Associati, 1969. — 129 min.

³ See Highet 1970; Grossvogel 1971; Segal 1971; Nethercut 1971; Bondanella 1988; Sütterlin 1996; Sullivan 2001; Brunet 2006; Paul 2009; Slavazzi 2009; Gianotti 2012; Iridon, Presadá 2015; Sampino 2017; Villa 2020; Fratantuono 2023.

⁴ Sinitsyn 2018a, 116–120; Sinitsyn 2018c, 75–79; Carrera 2019, 90, 99 f., 138 f.; Sinitsyn 2021b, 85–96.

⁵ On "historiographic cinema", see Sinitsyn 2019a, 107–110; Sinitsyn 2021d, 305–310.

⁶ Griffiths, Rabinowitz 2011; and Griffiths, Rabinowitz 2005 (in Russian).

⁷ Griffiths, Rabinowitz 2011, 144–175 (= Griffiths, Rabinowitz 2005, 213–266).

of the large scale of the film, is not an epic or a novel; the film is devoid of heroic pathetic, neither is it a romantic drama, nor an historical narrative about “the age of Great Rome” or any other grandiose mythical/historical events, as the Trojan War was for Homer and the Patriotic War of 1812 for L. N. Tolstoy. Yet, we encounter the Iliad and Odyssey motifs, plots and practices in Fellini’s work. Another matter if they were borrowed, or constituted a deliberate hint, or was it just their inadvertent influence?

With good reason, Martin M. Winkler may be called a classic in the study of Homeric parallels in contemporary cinematography: for several decades the scholar has been studying analogies with the mythology and the epic of Eurasian peoples in, predominantly, American cinema, having written more articles and books on that topic than anyone else⁸. His experience in examining the archetypes of the heroic narrative (mainly, the Greek-Roman sources) presented in a visual form has proved very influential. Kostas Myrsiades’ work of 2007 is a good example of interpreting American westerns as a Homeric epic⁹ (the 2009 impression of the collection edited by him¹⁰). The American philologist analyses *The Gunfighter* (1950), the movie directed by Henry King (starring Gregory Peck as the notorious Jimmy Ringo). Following Martin M. Winkler¹¹, K. Myrsiades examines κλέος (‘glory’) of Homer’s heroes as a parallel to understand heroism in the cultural tradition of the American West. He draws analogies with other values for the characters of westerns; the values the Homer’s heroes in the *Iliad* (to a greater extent) and the *Odyssey* champion and die for: τιμή (honour) and γέρας (gift; honours as a tribute paid to the hero)¹². Having compared Ringo, the “fastest gunfighter in the Wild West”, to Homer’s swift-footed Achilles, K. Myrsiades comes to the conclusion that

By exploring the themes of the hero’s cunning, homecoming, and reunion [the film] *The Gunfighter* can be read as a western *Odyssey*. However, *The Gunfighter* can also be seen as a western *Iliad* by placing the emphasis on the hero as a warrior striving to become “the fastest gun alive”, a title he equates with the honor and glory that will give

⁸ See Winkler, 1985; Winkler, 1988; Winkler, 1996; Winkler, 2001; Winkler, 2003; Winkler, 2004; Winkler, 2007; Winkler, 2009.

⁹ Myrsiades 2007 = Myrsiades 2009b.

¹⁰ Myrsiades 2009a.

¹¹ Winkler 1996.

¹² Myrsiades 2007, 280 ff. = Myrsiades 2009b, 230 ff. (with a review of literature on the topic).

meaning to his life. But as in the Homeric epics, through self discovery and self-recognition the hero ends by repudiating *timê*, *kleos* and *geras*, the values through which the Homeric hero strives to become *aristos Achaiōn* (the best of the Achaians)¹³.

In the articles of the collection edited by K. Myrsiades¹⁴, the scholars J. S. Burgess¹⁵ and Ch. C. Chiasson¹⁶ also discuss the theme of Homeric heroism and κλέος of warriors in the *Iliad* as presented in Wolfgang Peterson's film *Troy* (2004).

Professor Gregory N. Daugherty in his article "Indirect or Masked Modyssseys?" (2018) tried to generalize the 'Odyssean' motifs in the art of cinema¹⁷. The scholar shows that Homer's epic poem about peregrinations and the return of the King of Ithaca exerted colossal influence on the contemporary Western culture, including the cinema.

The *Odyssey* of Homer has had an enormous impact on western culture including cinema. Its receptions (Homer's *Odyssey*. — A. S.) have appeared at almost every stage of the history of film either as costumed epic or as adaptations of themes, plots, characters or folkloric structures to modern *nostoi* — tales of returns and homecomings. While some of the Homeric costume epics or direct adaptations contain allusions to contemporary wars (e. g. the US invasion of Iraq in *Troy* 2004), most of the indirect adaptations of the *Odyssey* explicitly reference western wars, wrenching socio-economic or even political conflict. Most of these seek to establish their connections to Homer ...¹⁸

G. N. Daugherty abstains from discussing various attempts (either successful or less successful) adaptations of the *Odyssey* which appeared at every stage of the history of cinematography as period dramas (Daugherty's costume epics) — numerous examples of peplum of the Old and New Worlds, whose golden age was the 1910s and the span of 1950s – 1960s. The scholar revisits the contemporary artistic practices of adaptation of Homeric motifs, plots, methods and folk patterns which abundant in films and TV series about wars and the return of a hero/heroes home. According to Daugherty, reading codes found in cinematic narrative (νόστοι) 'returns' reveals the link with the ancient source — Homer's *Odyssey*¹⁹. He singles out

¹³ Myrsiades 2007, 295.

¹⁴ Myrsiades 2009a.

¹⁵ Burgess 2009, 163–185, esp. 171 ff.

¹⁶ Chiasson 2009, 186–207.

¹⁷ Daugherty 2018.

¹⁸ Daugherty 2018, 19.

¹⁹ See new interesting collection of articles about hero's journey and return: "Odyssean Identities in Modern Cultures: The Journey Home" (Gardner, Murnaghan 2014).

the pictures where the ‘Odyssean’ elements are veiled²⁰. Using some works, the scholar analyses such a phenomenon as *Modyyssey*.

The modernized Odyssey — frequently referred to as a ‘Modyyssey’ — is almost a genre unto itself. Odyssean elements are evoked in order to elevate a modern journey to epic stature and or to underscore the critical differences. We should draw a distinction between a true Modyyssey and a more open quest plot or road picture film²¹.

I have already made an attempt to identify Homeric practices and motifs in the series directed by Tatijana M. Lioznova *Seventeen Moments of Spring*. This experience seemed interesting for interpreting the phenomenon of the film through the prism of ‘Homeric topoi’ as a Soviet myth of the ‘Trojan Horse’²².

As was already stated, I have examined the *Odyssey* motifs and practices of *FS* used by F. Fellini’s, B. Zapponi’s and B. Rondi’s, script writers, in my previous works. Now let us turn to the allusions to Homer’s *Iliad*, which are made either explicitly or implicitly in the film about Ancient Rome. Even more so that we have actual grounds to form an opinion about the “intersections”: the director’s own recollections and reviews, his cooperation with classics when he was in the process of making *FS*²³, stories told by the master’s contemporaries about the artistic designs he cherished, though never fulfilled.

2. “IO ERO ULISSE...”: FELLINI’S “YEARS OF HOMER AND ‘BATTLES’” IN THE JULIUS CAESAR GYMNASIUM

Federico Fellini as often as not acknowledged that he had always dreamt to make a film loosely based on the European ‘Book of Books’ — a duology the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* recounting the exploits of the heroes of the Trojan War. Fellini was inspired by Homer’s epic poem in his school years at Rimini gymnasium. Together with his classmates he would learn verses from these poems and play “Iliad games”, where they took on roles of kings and generals and acted out the parts of heroes. Later, Federico Fellini remembered the years spent at the Ginnasio Giulio Cesare (Julius Caesar) as “anni di Omero e della ‘pugna’” (“years of Homer and ‘battles’”). And the future director was Odysseus. Each of his classmates chose a role of his

²⁰ Daugherty 2018, *passim* (with examples).

²¹ Daugherty 2018, 20.

²² See Sinitsyn 2012.

²³ For greater detail, see Sinitsyn 2018c, 70–75 and Sinitsyn 2021b, 73–84 (with bibliography).

favourite epic character, assuming his name. In any case, this is what he tells in his autobiographic book *Making a Film (Fare un film, 1980)*:

Quelli del ginnasio sono gli *anni di Omero e della “pugna”* (italics mine. — A. S.). A scuola si leggeva l'*Iliade*, mandandola a memoria. Ciascuno di noi si era identificato con un personaggio di Omero. Io ero Ulisse, stavo un poco in disparte e guardavo lontano. Titta, già corpulento, era Aiace Oileo, Mario Montanari Enea, Luigino Dolci “il domatore di cavalla Ettore” e Stacchiotti, il più anziano di tutti perché aveva ripetuto ogni classe tre volte, era “il più veloce Achille”.

Il pomeriggio si andava in una piazzetta a ripetere tra noi la Guerra di Troia, lo scontro fra i troiani e gli achei. Andavamo, appunto, a “fare la pugna”. <...> L'*Iliade* veniva rivissuta anche in classe, dove i volti dei compagni di scuola si erano ormai sovrapposti agli eroi omerici: *in tal modo, le avventure di quegli eroi erano proprio le nostre* (italics mine. — A. S.). Così, quando un un giorno, andando Avanti nella lettura dell'*Iliade*, ci imbattemmo nella definizione di Aiace, chiamato da Omero “stupida massa di carne”, Titta che era Aiace cominciò a protestare, preso dall'odio verso Omero, quasi il poeta lo avesse, in tal modo, vilipeso fin dalle origini del mondo.

Giunti alla morte di Ettore, Luigino Dolci, che era Ettore, visse il suo grande momento. Povero Luigino! Trascinato come un verme intorno alle mura di Troia (with quotes of poems. — A. S.) <...> Luigino era morto. <...> La classe ammutoliva. Era stato Stacchiotti, con la nuova armatura fabbricatagli da Vulcano, colui che sapeva mettere in fuga i troiani con un sol grido²⁴.

Then follow examples of their childish “reconstructions” of Homer’s scenes: Ajax’s wrath (Luigi Benzi, nicknamed Titta, who shared the desk with Federico in the classroom), the death of Hector (Luigino), who was dragged along the walls of Troy; the shield of Achilles-Stacchiotti, for whom Vulcan made divine armour, but the hero had a weak point — his heel... Later, when Fellini speaks about his classmate Luigi Dolci (as Hector), he recalls again: “quello che nell'*Iliade* faceva Ettore (recitavamo per conto nostro l'*Iliade*)” (“We staged the *Iliad* ourselves”)²⁵.

In the “years of Homer”, the Rimini students had their own Zeus. They called the headmaster, who had a long flaming-red beard and a stern temper, the Lord of Mount Olympus. Unless, of course, the dreamer of Fellini made it up later. His fantasies and conjectures were legendary (see, for example, the chapter ‘I am a great liar’ in Benito Merlino’s book on Fellini)²⁶.

Asked by journalists about his childhood, adolescence and everything that could contribute to the making of a great film director, Fellini often responded

²⁴ Fellini 1980, 17–18; in Russian: Fellini 2022, 35–36.

²⁵ Fellini 1980, 12 = Fellini 2022, 29.

²⁶ Merlino 2015, 14–19.

with outright fiction, grey lies or the truth embellished and reconsidered in the light of his imagination²⁷.

B. Merlino then adduces examples of ‘truthful legends’ Fellini made up about his life. And “the great liar” is the story about himself²⁸. He did acknowledge that he never kept his memories but “put everything in his films” and “no longer could distinguish between what had actually happened and what he had made up”²⁹.

But this is how F. Fellini and T. Guerra, the script writers of *Amarcord* (1973), portray Zeus the headmaster: “standing at the window in the gymnasium are Zeus, the headmaster, and Signorina Leonardis, the teacher of mathematics, a buxom woman”³⁰; “Zeus the director, pats his long beard putting out a spark”³¹; “Zeus, the gymnasium headmaster, talks with the teachers waiting to be photographed”³², etc., etc. In anger, the Olympian deity of the headmaster ranted and raved at the students. Fellini speaks: “Il preside (the gymnasium. — A. S.), detto Zeus, una specie di Mangiafuoco...”³³ Luigi Benzi, another of Fellini’s erstwhile friend, the very same Titta as Ajax, also remembers the Thunder-bearer.

Modern Rimini is full of the Fellini topoi: Cinema “Fulgor”, Palazzina Dolce, central Cavour Square, the magnificent Grand Hotel (“Old Signora” as the narrator in *Amarcord* calls it), the gymnasiums the would-be director went to, the railway station and the railway line near the city cemetery, ancient Roman arches, Via Clementini, Via Briguenti, Via Dante...³⁴ Fellini’s many films — from *I Vitelloni* (1953) to *The Voice of the Moon* (*La voce della luna*, 1990) are the fruit of his reminiscences and dreams about the shadowy Rimini past. They are redolent of personal memories of his childhood and adolescence³⁵, his boyhood fantasies, fears, infatuation for Bianca Soriani, Homer’s epic, the streets and squares of Rimini where the “bookish children” played the Iliad game, the smells and sounds of his native town, cinema performances at Cinema “Fulgor”, “proper books”... Here, as young children they had their gods and heroes: Zeus, Achilles, Hector, Ajax, Aeneas... and, surely, the ingenious Odysseus — our Federico Federico.

²⁷ Merlino 2015, 14.

²⁸ Merlino 2015, 19.

²⁹ Merlino 2015, 18.

³⁰ Fellini, Guerra 2005, 202.

³¹ Fellini, Guerra 2005, 202.

³² Fellini, Guerra 2005, 305.

³³ Fellini 1980, 17.

³⁴ See, for example, the director’s memoirs (Fellini 1980, 3–40) and the chapter on Fellini’s Rimini in Benito Merlino’s book (Merlino 2015, 9–40).

³⁵ See Sinitsyn 2019a, 107 f.; Sinitsyn 2021d, 305 ff.

3. FELLINI'S YET ANOTHER "UNMADE DREAM"

G. Davydov in his article "Unmade dreams of Federico Fellini" focusses on the master's untapped designs: "Evidence of these unmade films is galore, scattered across his memoirs. Here and there, Fellini tells how he failed to embody the intended. <...> The number of Federico Fellini's unmade films is virtually larger than that of the made ones"³⁶. Indeed, but Davydov writes only about one of Fellini's unfulfilled projects — *G. Mastorna's Journey (Il viaggio di G. Mastorna)*, which the director kept revisiting throughout the twenty years, but never was able to carry them out³⁷. This "vague dream" would become Fellini's true "nightmare"³⁸. As a result, only a quarter of a century after he had first started to work on *The Journey*, at the turn of the 1990s, the director would turn this design into reality in the series of cartoons on the theme of the mysterious Mastorna³⁹. Yet, G. Davydov misses another unmade project (one may say another of his haunting dreams) — a grandiose intention to make a film loosely based on Homer's epic.

Alesandro Carrera, the author of the new monograph *The Eternal Rome of Fellini* (2018), provides a broader list of "film dreams" on the topics from European classical literature, noting parenthetically that rumours about "Fellini's Iliad" were afloat. "*Fellini's Divine Comedy* takes its place among his recurring dream together with *Fellini's Iliad* (which was rumoured too) and *Fellini's Don Quixote...*"⁴⁰. The director did acknowledge that "to make an adaptation of *Don Quixote* was the dream of his life"⁴¹, as well as to create a fanciful film about Dante's wanderings around Italy of the 13th century⁴². Fellini wanted to make a screen version of *Pinocchio* by Carlo Collodi⁴³, adapt into films fairy tales by Charles Perrot and Hans Christian Andersen, the surrealist novel *America* by Franz Kafka and other classical literature⁴⁴.

³⁶ Davydov 2010.

³⁷ Fellini, Chandler 2002, 330–332; see Fellini et al. 2013; also: Pacchioni 2016; Pacchioni 2020; Carrera 2020.

³⁸ See Benito Merlino's book, chapter "Nightmare: the damned film": Merlino 2015, 200–208, cf. *ibid.*, 211 ff., 258.

³⁹ Merlino 2015, 284, 297; Sampino 2017.

⁴⁰ Carrera 2018, 9.

⁴¹ Fellini, Chandler 2002, 330.

⁴² See the collective monograph: Achilli 2016; also: Fink 2004; Pinto 2005; Cappuccio 2008; Popova 2017; Carrera 2018, 9–19 (chapter 1 "Fellini, Dante and the Gaze of Medusa"); Carrera 2020; Malvezzi 2021.

⁴³ See Dusi 2017; Sinitsyn 2019a, 111 f.; Sinitsyn 2021d, 313 f.

⁴⁴ Fellini, Chandler 2002, 327–330.

An interesting deliberation about an “unmade dream” can be found in the book *Genius loci* by P. L. Vayl, writer and columnist:

Fellini would frequently say that he wanted to dramatize the *Iliad*, but he never did it — and no wonder. Though there are few books more fitting for screening. The *Iliad* can — and today’s people cannot otherwise — be read as a film script, and not a literary one, but as a detailed storyboard made by a film director. A local subject against the broad historical background, the torrential pace of the unfolding plot, the alternation of battle episodes and chamber psychological scenes, the rhythmic interchange of designs: large (battle), medium (the author’s or the commander’s viewpoint), and general (the view from Mount Olympus) — all this makes the thing stemming from the origin of Western civilization a masterpiece of the cinema⁴⁵.

This seemingly paradoxical (and even provocative) observation about the dramatized *Iliad* may, in my opinion, stand to reason. Indeed, the account of various scenes in Homer is not only graphic, visual, vivid, but it is amazingly similar to its cinematic rendering.

One of the chapters in Dmitry V. Panchenko’s book on Homer’s poems and the Trojan cycle of myths is called “The cinematographic’ technique”⁴⁶, with examples of cinematic practices in Homer’s poems. For greater detail of screen images and the cinematographic technique in Homer’s epic, see the new interesting study by E. V. Salnikova “The prehistory of the magic of screens. Motifs of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*”⁴⁷.

Homer’s accounts are visual, dynamic, tense, editable – in fact, cinematographic. And this “cinematographic” technique of the legendary Poet was the task for Federico Fellini to cope with: too grand for the Fellini of his school years, who learned verses from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* by heart to act out “Trojan battles”, together with his friends at school and on the streets of Rimini, but within the powers of the mature master Fellini, who had mastered all the nuances of the art of *fare un film* (making a film).

Charlotte Chandler mentions (by Fellini’s own statement) that producers made the director a proposition to dramatize Homer’s epic, and explains (in his own words) why he could not make his long-held dream come true.

Surely, I was approached with making an adaptation of the *Iliad*. As young children, we read and learned it by heart and then rushed outside and played the Greeks and the

⁴⁵ Vayl 2007, 418–419.

⁴⁶ Panchenko 2016, 46–49.

⁴⁷ Salnikova 2018, 120–157.

Trojans like American kids playing cops and gangsters. I don't know why but *it seemed to me improper to dramatize something like "Fellini Iliad"* (italics mine. — A. S.), and by no means would I be able to go with Homer's plot servilely. Moreover, it is difficult to find a convincing evocation of the work so firmly stuck in minds of many generations⁴⁸.

Thus, according to the master, he was as if too humble to compete with the great ancient sage. The author of the first epic poems was not only the founder of all ancient and European literature, but he might well be the creator of the Ancient Greek alphabet⁴⁹. And if the latter assumption is true,

In which case, Homer happens to be a downright giant of the cultural history of mankind — not only as a man traditionally deemed as a creator of the first two (and masterpieces at that) monuments of European culture, but also the author of one of the greatest and most useful inventions⁵⁰.

Indeed, Homer (the “conventional Homer”, the creator of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*) was “our everything” for the whole Hellenic and, later, Roman culture (see the final chapter “Homer in ages”) in I. E. Surikov's latest book on Homer⁵¹. The pioneer poet, creator and sage Homer was venerated not only by the whole Antiquity; since the Renaissance he has been reputed as “the monarch of poets” in Christian Europe as well; see, for example, *The Divine Comedy* by Dante: “Pay tribute to the almighty poet! (*l'altissimo poeta*)”; “Homer, the sublime singer of all countries”, *Inferno*, IV. 79, 88. During the age of oblivion of Homer's texts in the first centuries of the Middle Ages, and in Modern Times when Homer's poems got a new lease of life, the Poet was a symbol of European culture⁵². And he remained as such in the 20th century.

In the age of cinema, in the Old and New Worlds, Homer's epic may well be the most often dramatized (only to be surpassed by films on biblical subjects). Since the first days of the cinema, Homer's characters enthralled priests of the Tenth Muse (the fullest list of cinematographic and TV films based on Homer's poems and the Trojan cycle of myths till the end of the 2000s can be found in Hervé Dumont's comprehensive catalogue (2009)⁵³; see the above-mentioned study by

⁴⁸ Fellini, Chandler 2002, 329–330.

⁴⁹ In this connection, see interesting observations in Igor E. Surikov's article “the Unknown Benefactor”: Surikov 2019, 19–22.

⁵⁰ Surikov 2019, 21.

⁵¹ Surikov 2017, 282–302.

⁵² Surikov 2017, 299–302.

⁵³ In “L'Antiquité au cinéma: Vérités, légendes et manipulations”: Dumont 2009, 177–209.

G. N. Dougherty on Modysey in cinematic art⁵⁴; of latest publications⁵⁵; also a collective monograph edited by M. M. Winkler *Classical Myth and Culture in the Cinema*⁵⁶ and the recent collection *Reading Homer: Film and Text*⁵⁷; for an expanded list of literature, see in my review⁵⁸). Yet, the quality of numerous adaptations of both the Iliad and the Odyssey themes leaves much to be desired, but this is a different matter. It is indicative that even today Homer is sought out and — as usual — relevant.

According to P. L. Vayl, subjective principles of the cinema art did not allow Fellini to dare to dramatize Homer's epic:

<...> Fellini never filmed the *Iliad*: it may have been because the *Iliad* is 'us', and Fellini is only 'me'. That is why his antiquity contribution – instead of generating mass mythological conscience — is narrowed down to the utterly subjective *Satyricon*, which he downplayed even further by calling it *Fellini Satyricon*⁵⁹.

The juxtaposition of Homer's *us* and Fellini's *me* is checkered and graphic. Such a juxtaposition of artistic principles has its reasons, but it is radical, schematic and, as a condensed contraposed comparison, exaggerated. I can make two remarks on Petr Vayl's "antinomic" definition of approaches toward "the objective" author/authors of the European "Book of the Books" and the "utterly subjective" Fellini's *Satyricon*. First, as related to Homer's epic, A. F. Losev's formula of "a people as a creative individual and an individual as a creative people" invites objection⁶⁰. The Russian classic and philosopher writes in his book on Homer (the first edition in 1960):

...with good reason we can say that the Greek people taken as a whole and in its integrity is the only and last artistic individual who created the Homer poems, and that these

⁵⁴ Daugherty 2018, with literature.

⁵⁵ See Aziza 1998; Winkler, 2003; Winkler, 2004; Winkler, 2007; Myrsiades 2007; Winkler, 2009; Kinnard, Crnkovich 2017; Winkler 2017; Ivanova 2018; Augoustakis, Raucci 2018; Potter, Gardner 2022; Stafford 2024.

⁵⁶ Winkler 2001.

⁵⁷ Myrsiades 2009a.

⁵⁸ Sinitsyn 2018b, 6–7, 13.

⁵⁹ Vayl 2007, 419.

⁶⁰ Losev 2006, 61–67.

creative individuals (one or several) who created these poems were proponents of people's will without contributing into this work anything narrowly subjective or singularly-personal⁶¹.

Such speculations correlate with P. Vayl's definition of the *Iliad* as a product of "mass mythological conscience"; criticism of views on the *nationality* of Homer's epic can be found in I. M. Nakhov's article "My Homer"⁶².

The second observation is about Petr Vayl's thesis in the afore-mentioned citation — on "utter subjectivity" of *FS* as is reflected in Fellini's "upright", narrowed-down name. The matter is that the makers of the film had to authorize the title, as is well-known. The story is amusing: after losing the case against Alfredo Bini, Italian producer, and Gian Luigi Polidoro, film director, who released his *Satyricon* in March of the same year 1969, Federico Fellini and his producer Alberto Grimaldi had to yield the original (Petronius') namesake to his "competitors". After the lost litigation, Fellini's film was named after him — *Fellini Satyricon*⁶³; on G. L. Polidoro's *Satyricon*⁶⁴.

Of interest are comparisons adduced by P. L. Vayl:

Spielberg comes to succeed Fellini, and this is not a substitution of one master for another, it is a qualitative change: the notion 'fellini' is quite definite, that of 'spielberg' can mean anything, including 'fellini'. <...> Fellini never dramatized the *Iliad*, but what if Spielberg does it: he can, he 'does not care'. The epic, dinosaur swing allows him to shoot crowd scenes and choose actors for the production on such a scale that a small country would have to engage its entire population. To say nothing of the budget. <...> And if the characters of *Satyricon* (of Petronius. — A. S.), even more so, those of *Fellini Satyricon*, are contemporary, unsure of everything people, the *Iliad* would require thousands of pre-Gospel, one-dimensional persons, with eyes knowing no doubt⁶⁵.

Here are both the juxtaposition of artistic principles and the scale of the Italian Federico Fellini and his American colleague Steven Allan Spielberg, and the comparison of the *Iliad* with the ancient and the new (Fellini's) *Satyricons*. These sub-

⁶¹ Losev 2006, 62. Cf. *ibid.*: "The genuine immanent author of the Homer poems" is "the Greek people itself, <...> the genuine collective author" (p. 64); "nationwide creative work", "the Greek people itself as an integral crating individual" (p. 65).

⁶² Nakhov 2002.

⁶³ Merlino 2015, 218; Sinitsyn 2021c.

⁶⁴ Sinitsyn 2018c, 74–75; Sinitsyn 2021b, 83–84; Sinitsyn 2021c, 199 ff.; Pace 2009; Sampino 2017, 405 ff.

⁶⁵ Vayl 2007, 423–424.

jective observations made by Petr Vayl may seem trenchant, but it is not, as I understand, so much about rebukes given to Spielberg and the irony about the Spielberg art. Almighty (and ‘omnivorous’) S. A. Spielberg is the author of science fiction thrillers *Jaws* (1975) and two parts of *Jurassic Park* (1993 and 1997), a crime drama *The Sugarland Express* (1974), adventure tale *Hook* (1991), an epic historical drama *Munich* (2005), a war-historical dramas *Schindler’s List* (1993) and *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), a crime drama *Catch Me if You Can* (2002), an historiographic biopic *Lincoln* (2012), a science fiction thriller *Minority Report* (2002), an action adventure tetralogy about Indiana Jones (a recent Internet post says that the American director is working on the fifth part of this adventure series) and dozens of other successful projects. Jack-of-all-trades, indeed. Yes, S. A. Spielberg can dramatize everything! “He can – he doesn’t give a damn”, notes Vile. But the main thrust of the fore-quoted piece is that “Fellini never filmed the *Iliad*...”

Luca Canali, a famous Italian Latinist, expert in Petronius, who was a scholarly consultant for *FS*, spent “a whole year at the production set” (the film shoots lasted from November 1968 to May 1969), when interviewed by Nicola Pace about Fellini⁶⁶, never mentioned either Homer or the Homer themes. Chances are that the scholar says nothing about Homer and the Homer motifs because the interviewer asks him questions about the Latin language, Petronius’ novel and Roman literature⁶⁷. L. Canali may have forgotten about certain aspects, for almost 40 years has passed since the work on *FS* (the interview took place in Rome in the early 2007). But may the director have concealed (out of modesty? as Ch. Chandler points out, see above) his hubristic intentions to create his own *Iliad*?

Yet, we find direct references to Homer’s poem in *FS*⁶⁸. Fellini includes allusions to and reminiscences of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Some below-mentioned coincidences may seem far-fetched, some fortuitous, but I shall try to define them and make brief comments.

4. EVERYTHING STARTS WITH THE HERO’S RAGE

The main theme of the *Iliad* is the main hero’s rage. In the first verse Homer speaks about Achilles Peleus’ wrath that brought endless troubles to the whole Greek army at Troy. The word wrath (μῆνις) starts the poem. Μῆνιν ἄειδε, θεά, — appeals the poet to the goddess begging her to tell everyone what happened to the Achaeans after they had lost the warrior Achilles (Hom. *Il.* 1. 1–5):

⁶⁶ Pace 2009.

⁶⁷ L. Canali was responsible for the preparation of dialogues in Latin for *Fellini Satyricon*; Gianotti 2012, 568 ff.; Pace 2009, 44 ff.

⁶⁸ See Sinitsyn 2018c and Sinitsyn 2021b.

The wrath do thou sing, O goddess, of Peleus' son, Achilles, that baneful wrath which brought countless woes upon the Achaeans, and sent forth to Hades many valiant souls of warriors, and made themselves to be a spoil for dogs and all manner of birds...⁶⁹

Fellini's film starts with the passionate soliloquy of Encolpius [*FS*, 00:00:58 ff.].

<...> And who condemned me to this solitude? He who bears the mark of every known vice, who by his own admission should be banished — Ascylos! He won his freedom through whoring and keeps it the same way. He gambled away his youth. He sold himself as a woman, even when approached as a man. And that shameless Giton? On the Day of the Virile Toga he wore a woman's stole. His mother had already convinced him not to act like a man. In jail he was a whore, capable of forsaking the oldest of friendships. Shame on him! He's a disgrace! And now, wrapped in each other's arms, they spend entire nights together... and laugh at me [*FS*, 00:01:14–00:02:01].

It should be noted that such an introduction is missing in Petronius' *Satyricon*. The novel, as it reached us, opens with a literary and critical prologue speaking about poets, orators and painters of the past as compared with those contemporary ones; it mentions Greek and Roman classics: Pindar, Sophocles, Euripides, Thucydides, Plato, Demosthenes, Lucilius, and Cicero. This peculiar *prooemium* ends with a poetic improvisation "in the vein of Lucilius" (*Petr. Sat.* 1–5). Encolpius' soliloquy "Ergo me non ruina terra potuit haurire?.." — the pun of which begins *FS* — is found in the middle of Petronius' novel (*Petr. Sat.* 81). The ancient *Satyricon* speaks about the hero's grievance (*ibid.*): "But they (Ascylos and Giton. — A. S.) shall suffer for it. I am no man, and no free citizen, if I do not avenge my wrongs with their hateful blood (*Nam aut vir ego liberque non sum, aut noxio sanguine parentabo iniuriae meae*)"⁷⁰. Petronius uses the word *iniuria* a dozen times, but only on several occasions this is related to the main hero: *Petr. Sat.* 10 (*in memoriam revocatus iniuriae*); *Petr. Sat.* 81 (*loc. cit.*); *Petr. Sat.* 91 (*Dignus hac iniuria fui?*) and *Petr. Sat.* 131.

Fellini's Encolpius is forever blasphemous, using obscene comparisons, but in the beginning the other heroes do not hear him. His frenzied speech is addressed to the camera — to the audience. The introductory scene "Encolpius' wrath" is meant to present the protagonist to the audience. Yet, contrary to the *Iliad*, the hero's wrath is not the main topic of *FS*. After having retrieved his own (obtaining Giton for just one night), Encolpius immediately forgets his grievance. He behaves in the

⁶⁹ Homer 1928, 3.

⁷⁰ Petronius 1922, 163.

same vein the following morning, after his young mates had split up the jointly acquired property and Ascylos again abducted Giton. But the “beginning” of Fellini’s film is similar to that of the *Iliad*: in violent rage Encolpius promises “countless woes” to all his offenders and his offenders are none other than his mates.

Who and what is Achilles fuming with rage at, after abandoning the Achaean army and wishing to avenge his partisans? — At the “King-of-kings”, Agamemnon, elected Commander of all the Greeks at Troy. He had captured the maiden belonging to Peleus. In the presence of the whole military assembly, Agamemnon Atreus offended the most outstanding chief of the Achaean army. Achilles’ rage is so great that it reaches Mount Olympus (with the help of his mother, Thetis) and aggravates the conflict among gods. And, as the saying goes, it is the usual “cherchez la femme” thing. Agamemnon, in response to the loss of his concubine, Chryseis, whom he had to return to her father, deprives the proud-hearted Achilles of his concubine, Briseis: Hom. *Il.* 1. 182 sqq.; and Hom. *Il.* 1. 322 sqq., 336 sqq. (Achilles gives away Briseis and takes his oath); Hom. *Il.* 1. 391 sqq. (the hero tells his mother what had happened and implores her to take vengeance); Hom. *Il.* 2. 688–690: “For he lay in idleness among the ships, the swift-footed, goodly Achilles, in wrath because of the fair-haired girl Briseis, whom he had taken out of Lyressus after sore toil...”⁷¹

Also, the rage of the protagonist of *FS* at the beginning of the story is aimed at a particular offender⁷². Encolpius is angry with his partner Ascylos, who abducted Giton, a handsome youth. But both the fellows bear the brunt. The reason for of this rage in both Homer and Fellini is the protagonist’s object of passion: Achilles’ μῆνις because of the concubine Briseis, Encolpius’ *ira* and *odium* (“baneful wrath”) owing to the effeminate Giton.

5. NOTES ON COMIC AND EROTIC PARALLELS

The main characters in *FS* are students, rather, former students, or “perpetual students”. In the scene of division of their scanty possessions, Encolpius says to Ascylos, “We’re both students of literature, yet we’ve become the laughingstock of the whole city” [*FS*, 00:18:40–00:18:53]. Both the wayward fellows are well-versed in Ancient literature, including the Greek literature. Indicative in this sense is the episode at the Suicide Villa⁷³. When the heroes enter an empty house, they see *imagines majorum* — wax sculptural portraits and masks of ancestors sitting on the table

⁷¹ Homer 1928, 101.

⁷² See in Kennedy 1978: “Encolpius and Agamemnon in Petronius”.

⁷³ In his permissive interpretation of Petronius’ novel, Fellini never hesitated to omit the original *Satyricon* episode and added new ones; the scene “The Suicide Villa” is not

[*FS*, 01:15:58–01:16:20]. Ascyrtos sneers: “The ancestors of the owners! ... My word, so many sentries!” He grasps one of the masks, and, waving his stick, mischievously recites the lines from Archilochus about the short and bow-legged, yet powerful in spirit, warrior who is better than a splendid-haired, exquisite strategist: οὐ φιλέω μέγαν στρατηγὸν οὐδὲ διαπεπλιγμένον / οὐδὲ βοστρύχοισι γαῦρον οὐδ’ ὑπεξυρημένον... (Archil. fr. 114 West; “I don’t love a tall leader, or one striding far, or one who takes pride in his hair or shaved head. No, give me a shorter man, who looks bowed near the shins but who is sure on his feet, and strong of heart...”).

This pictorial quotation from Ancient Greek classics may reveal an indirect reference to the author of the *Iliad*. It is telling that the Ascyrtos, a literary artist manqué, recites not certain lines from the heroic poem about the great war and its glorious warriors (abundant in military poignancy), but, on the contrary, a fragment of the poem by the same author of the archaic age, which had borrowed little from Homer’s ethos⁷⁴. Rather, Archilochus demonstrates the lack of interest in the former heroic system of values (remember his verse about the forsaken shield which the enemy, got hold of, but the poet boasts that he managed to flee from the battle field “unburdened”: Archil. fr. 5 West). As G. S. Kirk, “Here (in Archilochus. — A. S.) is nothing, or practically nothing, of the old heroic ideology based on reputation and honour. <...> Rather the poet looks out on his world cynically, appraisingly, without excessive expectation — aware of his own selfhood and its limitations as he confronts the unyielding environment without flinching”⁷⁵. So, Fellini’s humour is that this inserted episode in *FS* the citation from Archilochus serves to highlight, in the ethic sense, antiheroic and, probably, anti-Homeric nature of the main heroes of the film. Thereby, this topos can also be deemed as an intertextual parallel of Homer’s epic and ethos – another comical allusion in Fellini’s vein. And if, knowing Ascyrtos’ ethos, we take οὐ φιλέω literally: “I don’t love”, then, the fandangle scene with the hero jumping around the room with sacred *imagines majorum* can be regarded as implicitly erotic.

Various comical “homerisms” are found in the scene of the grandiose feast at Trimalcheo’s, where Fellini makes great play with the famous *cena Trimalchionis* in Petronius’ novel⁷⁶. Here are ridiculous “citations” from the classics, which the

part of Petronius’ novel; discussion: Sinitsyn 2018c, 77 = Sinitsyn 2021b, 89, 91; detailed analysis of the scene: Salvador Ventura 2014, 111 ss.

⁷⁴ Kirk 1988, 402.

⁷⁵ Kirk 1988, 403. Here also see: “and the poet’s boast that he had abandoned his shield but would get another just as good (fr. 5 West) reflects something of Odysseus’ calculating genius for survival”.

⁷⁶ Sinitsyn 2018c, 71–73; Sinitsyn 2021b, 76–80 (here with bibliography about *cena Trimalchionis*, p. 77, note 3).

vulgar rich host keeps pouring forth, and his comparing himself to the ingenious Ulysses, and the words addressed to a guest: “Give us some Homer!... I like to hear Greeks while I’m eating” [*FS*, 00:32:20–00:32:28]. Other examples of naturalism and the grotesque can be found in Fellini’s film (which does not call for comment) and in Homer’s poems, not only in the adventure-tale *Odyssey*, but also in the stern heroic *Iliad*⁷⁷.

In Petronius, lovers often call themselves “brother” (*frater*) and “sister” (*soror*): Petr. *Sat.* 9; 11; 13; 25, *etc.*; especially telling is the episode in which the poor Encolpius got enmeshed in the affair with Circe (yet another parallel with the Homeric couple of Odysseus and Circe): Petr. *Sat.* 126–130. Such a reference can be found in other Roman authors: Catullus (*Carm.* 100), Martialis (*Epigr.* II. 4; III. 88; IV. 16; VIII. 81 *et al. loc.*) and many other sources⁷⁸.

The ancient *Satyricon* has a passage (129. 1) in which Encolpius compares himself to Achilles (to be more precise, to anti-Achilles, who is incapable of a “heroic deed”): “I tell you, brother, I do not realize that I am a man, I do not feel it. That part of my body where I was once an Achilles is dead and buried (*Crede mihi, frater, non intellego me virum esse, non sentio. Funerata est illa pars corporis, qua quondam Achilles eram*)”⁷⁹. The mythic Achilles, the hero of the Trojan cycle, is “a soldier”, and his weapon is a sword. Petronius speaks about a totally different kind of “tool”. The hero confesses to his lover Giton that when his “sword” was hard he regarded himself as “Achilles”... in the erotic art. Encolpius/Polyaenos confesses in a letter to matron Circe: *Illud unum memento, non me sed instrumenta peccasse. Paratus miles arma non habui* (Petr. *Sat.* 130).

In Fellini’s film, Encolpius uses a similar comparison when talking with his ‘brother’ Ascyrtos. He complains that his sword is blunted [*FS*, 01:45:03]. It is clear that it is not about arms, but about *pars corporis*. In *FS* such an obscene reference to the protagonist of Homer’s *Iliad* is akin to the spirit of Petronius’ novel. *FS* frequently recurs to the sexual debility that befell Encolpius / quasi-Achilles through the comparison to a blunted sword: “I am a soldier with a blunted sword”. And Eumolpus in the Garden of Delights: “There’s a friend of yours. Now he’s a soldier without a weapon, his sceptre isn’t working”.

⁷⁷ The discussion can be found in A. F. Losev: Losev 2006, 234–239, esp. 237 ff.

⁷⁸ See, for example, Bannon 1997, 77–90 (“Lovers and brothers”), esp. p. 79 f., 85 ff.

⁷⁹ Petronius 1922, 287.

If Encolpius is an allusion to the sword-bearer Achilles (or, again, anti-Achilles: *quondam Achilles eram*), then the Fellinian couple, Encolpius and Ascyltos, is a parallel with the Homeric couple, Achilles and Patroclus⁸⁰. The latter two were inseparable and bound to each other since childhood. Yet, in the *Iliad* they are shown as friends, and if “brothers”, then *only at arms* (military, surely). Direct indications to their love affairs of these two heroes are missing, though here scholars’ opinions differ⁸¹. Josho Brouwers in “Romantic Love in Homer” writes:

It should be pointed out that romantic love in the Homeric poems always takes the form of a relationship between a man and a woman. Nevertheless, there have been many attempts at interpreting the bond between Achilles and Patroclus as essentially homosexual⁸². To later ancient authors, theirs was a *pseudo-pederastic relationship* (italics mine. — A. S.); <...> Evidence for the existence of homosexual love between men in either the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* is tenuous to nonexistent⁸³.

C. Warwick in his article on post-Homer representation of relations between Achilles and Patroclus in the classic Greek Literature writes: What Achilles and Patroclus feel towards each other in the *Iliad* is something altogether unusual, it is love transcending ordinary human relations⁸⁴; but “the *Iliad* does not characterize Achilles and Patroclus as pederast lovers...”⁸⁵ Cf. Thomas Hubbard’s speculation in the article published in the new *Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World* on Greek and Roman sexualities (2014):

The Homeric epics make no explicit reference to homosexual desire or acts between the two (Achilles and Patroclus. — A. S.) <...> Epic tradition is generally reticent

⁸⁰ See, for example, on homoerotic relations in Hellas: Patzer 1982; Sargent 1986; Halperin 1990; Halperin, Winkler, Zeitlin 1990; Percy 1996; Lloyd 1999; Halperin 2002; Cantarella 2002; Hubbard 2003; Davidson 2007; Hubbard 2014; Blondell, Ormand 2015; Masterson, Sorkin Rabinowitz, Robson 2015; Dover 2016; Kapparis 2018; Gilhuly 2018, and our review of this book: Sinitsyn, Galanin 2023 (and here see the bibliography on the topic: p. 481, note 1 and 482, note 2) and Boehringer 2021.

⁸¹ Publications for discussion: Clarke 1978; Barrett 1981; Patzer 1982, 94–98; Sargent 1986, 250 ff.; James 1989; Halperin 1990, 76 ff., 83–87, 177, notes 9–10; Shay 1994, 40–44; Bannon 1997; Mills 2000; Morales, Mariscal 2003; Hubbard 2003; Morales, Mariscal 2005; Davidson 2007; Brouwers 2012, 106 f., 109 f.; Warwick 2013; Barutkin 2014; Lear 2014; Hubbard 2014, 142; Dover 2016, 41, 53, 197 ff., 206; Galanin 2022; Wittenberg 2023.

⁸² Here J. Brouwers refers to W. M. Clarke’s 1978 work “Achilles and Patroclus in Love”.

⁸³ Brouwers 2012, 106–107.

⁸⁴ Warwick 2013, 1.

⁸⁵ Warwick 2013, 2.

about same-sex love because, whatever may have been going on in Crete or Sparta at this time, it lacked sufficient pan-Hellenic status to be acknowledged in poems that were meant to appeal to all Greeks. Homosexuality is thus left as a possible reading for those members of the audience inclined to it, but it nowhere forces itself upon us⁸⁶.

A later ancient tradition, represented by Aeschylus (*Myrm.* fr. 135–137 TGF 3, Radt), Pindar (*Olymp.* 10. 16–19), Sophocles (*Achill. am.* fr. 149, 153, 157 TGF 4, Radt) — (?), Xenophon (*Sym.* 7. 31), Plato (*Sym.* 179e–180b and 208d), Aeschines (*Contra Timarch.* 133, 141–150), Hellenic and Roman authors, points to the intimate context of relations between Achilles and Patroclus. Here is a quotation from Plato's erotic dialogue *The Symposium* (179e sq.):

...because having learnt from his mother that he would die as surely as he slew Hector, but if he slew him not, would return home and end his days an aged man, he bravely chose to go and rescue his lover Patroclus, avenged him, and sought death not merely in his behalf but in haste to be joined with him whom death had taken. For this the gods so highly admired him that they gave him distinguished honour, since he set so great a value on his lover. And Aeschylus talks nonsense when he says that it was Achilles who was in love with Patroclus; for he excelled in beauty not Patroclus alone but assuredly all the other heroes, being still beardless and, moreover, much the younger, by Homer's account⁸⁷.

There are a lot of literary works on the union of Achilles and Patroclus⁸⁸. In the post-Homeric time, these heroes of the Trojan cycle of myths often were shown as paragons of loyalty of soldiers-lovers⁸⁹. Petronius in the first part of the novel portrays an erotic love triangle: Encolpius — Giton — Ascyrtos. Then Giton stays with the main hero, and Ascyrtos falls out of the story: having taken advice given by Eumolpus (*Petr. Sat.* 98–99), Encolpius, together with Giton, having got rid of the rival — Ascyrtos — embark on a ship. The ancient *Satyricon* does not describe the scenes of love of Encolpius and Ascyrtos⁹⁰.

⁸⁶ Hubbard 2014, 142.

⁸⁷ Plato 1925, 105, 107.

⁸⁸ Here I shall make reference to certain works: Clarke 1978; Halperin 1990, 86, 128; Bannon 1997, 81, 84 f.; Davidson 2007; Sinitsyn 2008a; Sinitsyn 2008b, 397 ff.; Fisher 2014, 246, 254; Lear 2014, 103, 112, 115 f.; Dover 2016, 53, 70, 162, 197; Kapparis 2018, 207, 252; Wittenberg 2023.

⁸⁹ See discussion: Warwick 2013, 3–14.

⁹⁰ See notes by A. J. L. Blanshard: Blanshard 2015, 267–268, 270.

The film highlights the homoerotic theme. Encolpius and Ascyrtos are coevals, lovers, ('brothers'), partners, henchmen, but, first and foremost, they are rivals⁹¹. Fellini makes Giton a gender surrogate of a mistress, of both Encolpius and Ascyrtos, who, through claiming the young handsome boy, seek to straighten out their personal relations.

Showing the history of wanderings of ancient Roman "mother's darlings"⁹², Fellini communicates the post-Homer tradition presenting the couple of Achilles-Patroclus as true lovers *par excellence*. In *FS*, sexual relations are not only spoken about by the heroes themselves, but there are episodes that illustrate their intimacy. For example, the scene in the abandoned villa, where the fellows, infatuated with each other, forget about an attractive Negress. In the first part of the film, the heroes argue over Giton, but later this handsome youth disappears from the story, and both 'brothers' stay true to each other.

6. ON DEATH IN THE FINALE

The main heroes on *FS*, like Achilles and Patroclus in the *Iliad* (contrary, again, to those in Petronius' novel) stay together until one of them dies. Homer's Patroclus dies at the hand of Hector (Hom. *Il.* 16. 818–863), and Fellini's 'Patroclus' dies in the finale. No heroism here, naturally. Ascyrtos was killed by a man who coveted the heavily-lined purse that they were careless enough to boast of on the jetty on their way to Oenothea, the sorcerer. In the fight on the shore, the wretched boatman stabs Ascyrtos with a sword. Encolpius, in the same way as at the beginning of the film, shouts for his 'brother', only to find him dead in the grass by the shore, and he mourns his death [*FS*, 01:56:44–01:57:33]. Fellini's 'Achilles' does not arrange for the funeral feast, nor does he avenge his perished friend; *FS* is not a heroic work, on the contrary, it is anti-heroic⁹³.

For comparison: in Petronius, Ascyrtos does not die, he simply drops from the story. For the last time, Ascyrtos appears in an inn where he comes looking for Giton, the youth who deserted him (Petr. *Sat.* 97). Then Encolpius flees, and the rival friends never meet again (in any case, according to the survived fragments). Ascyrtos is altogether missing from the last third of the *Satyricon* (98–141), his place is now occupied by 'brother' Giton. Only once (out of jealousy and enmity, not of grief) does the main hero remembers his old buddy: in Petronius *Sat.* 133, Encolpius asks Giton about the night when Ascyrtos took him away.

⁹¹ Richardson 2014, 489–490.

⁹² Fellini, Chandler 2002, 193.

⁹³ On this film as anti-peplum, see Sinitsyn 2018c, 84–88 and Sinitsyn 2021b, 108–118 (with bibliography).

By the end of the novel, Petronius ostensibly forgets about the deuteragonist Ascyrtos. And Fellini holds him one of the main (second in importance) characters, starting from the scene in the Roman bath to the last but one scene on the shore before the final episode with the devouring of Eumolpus' cadaver. Throughout the entire second part of *FS*, Ascyrtos follows his partner through “labyrinths” of Ancient Rome⁹⁴. The death of the deuterogamist in the film is the finishing line in the story of the narrator. It is after the death of Ascyrtos that Encolpius starts another round of his adventures (of which the audience will never know anything).

7. THE UNITY OF ACTION, TIME SPAN, MAGNITUDE, FRAGMENTARITY, FRAME ENTEGRITY AND DIGRESSIONS

In the first chapters of Aristotle's *Poetics*, which speak of imitation of action, the ancient philosopher notes (*Poet.* 8, 1451a):

A plot is not unified, as some think, if built round an individual. Any entity has innumerable features, not all of which cohere into a unity; likewise, an individual performs many actions which yield no unitary action. <...> But Homer <...> structured the *Odyssey* round a unitary action of the kind I mean, and likewise with the *Iliad*. Just as, therefore, in the other mimetic arts a unitary mimesis of an action, should be of a unitary and indeed whole action⁹⁵.

Indeed, in his myths (μῦθοι), Homer mastered “unity of action” (μία πράξις), and “unity of mimesis” (μία μίμησις) of such action to perfection. In the heroic epic *Iliad*, the poet does not portray all the ten years of the Greek war for Troy and the return home of all the Achaean warrior kings, and in the nostalgic adventure *Odyssey* he does not narrate the whole hero's journey. Both poems have their narrative cores: Achilles' wrath (the *Iliad*) and the return home of Odysseus the king/Penelope's faithfulness in awaiting her spouse (the *Odyssey*). The poem about war says nothing of the causes of the conflict between the Achaeans and the Trojans, neither is there courtship of Helen by her suitors, nor a bone of contention, nor the mustering of heroes for a march, nor accounts of the events of the first nine years of the war... The Homeric bard never speaks about the heroic and tragic end of the events at Ilion. Achilles, Ajax, Priam, Hecuba, Paris ... they are all alive in the *Iliad*. Although the fall of the doomed city is still just weeks or months away, *Odyssey* has not come up yet with an artful trick of the wooden horse — *Danaum donum*. Troy is still whole and impregnable. The poem about Ithaca's king says nothing about

⁹⁴ See discussion: Sinitsyn 2018c, 75–79; Sinitsyn 2021b, 85–96, 99 ff.

⁹⁵ Aristotle 1995, 57, 59.

the birth of the hero, his young years and injuries sustained during the hunt, nor how the ingenious Laertes feigned madness when the suitor kings were preparing for the march on Troy, there is no mention about death of Odysseus at his son Telegonus' hand, either... All this is redundant for the "unity of action". The *Odyssey* is not a biography of the mythic hero; it is a poem about the return and expectations.

The *Iliad* gives one episode of the tenth year of the war. As is well-known, the poem spans only several days. Alexey F. Losev in his book on Homer counts the number of the eventful days in the *Iliad*⁹⁶ and in the *Odyssey*⁹⁷ and arrives at the following conclusions: 1) "the time span in the *Iliad* is 51 days", but "only 9 days of the last year of the war are well accounted for"⁹⁸; 2) "In the *Odyssey*, of 40 days only 9 are full of more or less important events <...> Of 10 years of Odysseus' peregrinations, the poem portrays only the last days before his return to Ithaca and several days in Ithaca"⁹⁹. A. F. Losev points at the total chronological span of 51 days of the *Iliad* in another place¹⁰⁰.

Igor E. Surikov in his book *Homer* gives the total number of days in both poems (50 in the *Iliad* and 40 in the *Odyssey*¹⁰¹) with reference to the history textbook on ancient literature by N. A. Chistyakova and N. V. Vulikh¹⁰²; cf. "If everything told in the *Iliad* happens in fifty days, then the events in the *Odyssey* fill forty days"¹⁰³. In Sergey I. Radzig (1940): "all action [the *Iliad*] takes only fifty days of the decade-long siege of Troy by Achaeans <...>. All action [the *Odyssey*] coincides with the last forty days of his (Odysseus'. — A. S.) journey..."¹⁰⁴ And cf. in the aforementioned American monograph on the Russian novel by F. T. Griffiths and S. J. Rabinowitz: "The *Iliad* says what needs saying about the Trojan War by recounting forty days or so in the last year of the siege"¹⁰⁵ — here the number of days in the heroic poem is lowered down. For the discussion about number in Homer and the analysis of eventful days, see "The Anatomy of the *Iliad*" by Lev S. Klein¹⁰⁶. According to

⁹⁶ Losev 2006, 15–17; cf. *ibid.*, 159–162.

⁹⁷ Losev 2006, 17–21.

⁹⁸ Losev 2006, 17.

⁹⁹ Losev 2006, 21.

¹⁰⁰ Losev 2001, 35.

¹⁰¹ Surikov 2017, 20.

¹⁰² Surikov 2017, 304.

¹⁰³ Chistyakova, Vulikh 1963, 33.

¹⁰⁴ Radzig 1982, 57.

¹⁰⁵ Griffiths, Rabinowitz 2011, 145 = Griffiths, Rabinowitz 2005, 216.

¹⁰⁶ Klein 1998, 218–259 and 351–356.

A. F. Losev, the numbers of eventful days in the poems is 9¹⁰⁷. The narration of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* is compact, integral, dimensional and concentrated on one theme.

The content of *FS* is also a “cut” from Encolpius’ life story — a “median” part of his adventures. The unity of action of this work is determined by the story of relations between the main hero and Ascyltos. Thus, the deliberately-puzzling film by Fellini proves more integral than the fragmentary novel by Petronius. It also encompasses only several eventful days (the total count is hardly possible here, but this is of no consequence). The movie has no beginning (as if it “has not survived”) — the author plunges the audience into action. In the first scene Encolpius begins his soliloquy in which he scolds and curses his rivals. But the audience learns something from these angry words about the hero himself: that he is a wanderer, exiled from his country, a killer fleeing from law... [*FS*, 00:00:58–00:01:13]. At the end, Fellini’s *Satyricon* abruptly ends in the mid-sentence: “On an island covered with tall, fragrant grasses... I met a young Greek who told me that in the years ...” [*FS*, 02:01:04–02:01:25]

The last words uttered by the narrator (the story is told by the protagonist Encolpius) allow us to think that only now the most interesting things are about to start happening, that his future travels will surpass everything already said about his peregrinations. The hero sets out on a long journey together with his new friends in search of adventure. Yet, like the fragments of extant ancient texts and remains of artefacts, Fellini’s film has no end — as if it has been “devoured by time”. The director fantasized:

I imagine how in the distant year 4000 our descendants will come across a vault containing the long-forgotten film of the 20th century and a projector to watch it with. “What a pity!” — an archaeologist would sigh, having watched something entitled Fellini *Satyricon*, — “It has no beginning, middle and end. How strange!”¹⁰⁸

In both works — the *Iliad* and *FS* — the text is determined by frame composition. Homer starts his poem with Achilles’ wrath and his quarrel with Agamemnon and ends it with a scene when Priam the Trojan King buys out the body of his son Hector and the protagonist represses his anger. The circular composition of the *Iliad* is created by the evolution of the protagonist’s disposition. “Achilles not so much embodies a certain ethos as marks the change in the ethos, be it only with the events

¹⁰⁷ See the notes in my article: Sinitsyn 2012, 347–349 and 364–365.

¹⁰⁸ Fellini, Chandler 2002, 192.

of his personal change – from implacability and cruelty to leniency and clemency¹⁰⁹. In his monograph *The Change of Achilles' Temper* R. G. Apresyan notes:

The last book of the *Iliad* (i.e., book 24. — A. S.) describing the encounter of Priam and Achilles is the pinnacle of this heroic epic poem, and the final episode affirms the values of reconciliation, compassion and charity¹¹⁰.

The composition of the structure of Fellini's work set in ancient Rome is also circular. In spite of its "openness" (as if without a beginning and end), theatrical "disruption" of the text with deliberately missing linking episodes, this film has a closed structure¹¹¹. In the first shots of *FS*, the screen is blank — a grey outside wall of a building marked with dark streaks; the final episode shows walls decorated with coloured frescoes¹¹². These frescoes in the finale of *FS* decorate the inside walls of a Roman building, of which only ruins have been 'preserved', like the ancient frescoes in Pompeii and Herculaneum¹¹³. "It is highly appropriate", notes J. P. Sullivan, "that the last glimpse the audience has of the film's antiheroes, Encolpius and Giton, is in a freeze-framed faded fresco of Pompeian colors"¹¹⁴. In fragments of these frescoes, the audience recognizes many characters of *Fellini Satyricon*, as if created by an Ancient Roman artist¹¹⁵. Fellini illustrates, "In the end all these people, whose lives were so real to them, are only fragments of frescoes"¹¹⁶.

I shall highlight yet another point, which I spoke about in another article¹¹⁷, here I shall only repeat myself. In the first scene of *FS*, Encolpius begins his fiery monologue standing with his back to the audience, facing a concrete wall. While in the end of the film, the blow-up shows a serene face of the main hero facing the camera. As it seems to me, this about-turn of the protagonist and the wall/walls in the

¹⁰⁹ Apresyan 2013, 164; cf. *ibid.*, 190 ff.

¹¹⁰ Apresyan 2013, 130; see in this book, chapter 4 'Charity' (Apresyan 2013, 130–160).

¹¹¹ Sinitsyn 2018c, 79–81; Sinitsyn 2021b, 96–101.

¹¹² For detailed treatment of the screen-wall and the wall in the *Iliad* as a "great-screen image", see Salnikova 2018, 147–155.

¹¹³ Hough-Dugdale 2020, 245–246: "The scene then cuts to a close-up of Encolpio against a sparkling sea-screen. The frame freezes and morphs itself into a painting, as if to insist on creating rather than capturing an image. Finally, the camera pulls back to reveal that the portrait of Encolpio is really one of several frescoes of the film's main characters, painted on crumbling walls, alternative "screens" foregrounded while a distant sea-screen all but fades into the background".

¹¹⁴ Sullivan 2001, 260.

¹¹⁵ Aldouby 2013.

¹¹⁶ See Fellini, Chandler 2002, 195.

¹¹⁷ Fellini, Chandler 2002, 195.

first and the last episodes — the whole, but bare wall in the beginning, and fragmentary, yet with frescoes, in the finale — create “the frame” of the film’s composition.

The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* contain numerous brief and extensive diversions from the main theme, which refer to earlier events or predict the forthcoming ones. Inserted episodes in Homer’s epic are of different nature: illustrative, comparative, and explanatory. Digressions are also found in *FS*, though they are few. For example, a story about the Matron from Ephesus [*FS*, 00:45:50–00:49:35] and the story told by a warden of the Garden of Delight about the magic fire of Oenothea [*FS*, 01:48:10–01:51:00].

Especially indicative in *FS* is the diversion about the widow of Ephesus. This story may well be the most well-known passage in Petronius’ *Satyricon* (it was very popular in the medieval and in the early modern periods¹¹⁸). Yet, Fellini “modernized” the legend to avoid “unnecessary” allusions to the Christian crucifixion¹¹⁹. In Petronius, the poet Eumolpius on board a ship (*Petr. Sat.* 111–112), tells an intriguing story, as an example of women’s ingenuity, about the inconsolable widow and a sympathizing soldier only to amuse his fellows with gags and giggles (*Petr. Sat.* 110). While in the film, it is told, all at once, by one of Trimalchio’s guests in the tomb of the nouveau riche. In *FS*, the plot does not call it; it is a cut-in episode. And the authors of the film use the following link to pass to this story: after the rehearsal of Trimalchio’s burial and the mourning of the ‘deceased’ rich man, the extravagant narrator, crowned with a wreath, begins like this,

No one’s ever been able to tell us what the realm of the dead is like, whereas we all know how we like to linger in the land of the living. Who doesn’t know the story of the young lady of Ephesus? [*FS*, 00:45:40–00:45:53]

When shooting the well-known Satyriconian parable, the author of his own fanciful *Satyricon* may have used the method of inclusion of a cut-in episode for the sake of the very principle of diversion.

8. IN LIEU OF CONCLUSION: REVISITING DISCUSSION

Fellini never made his *Iliad*. But, as it seems, the problem was not only because he lacked “the eyes knowing no doubt” (a quotation from P. Vayl at the beginning of the article). In his “extremely subjective” work, the great Italian master often re-

¹¹⁸ See McGlathery 1998; Karaman 2018; Brennan 2023 (with bibliography).

¹¹⁹ Sinitsyn 2018c, 85 f.; Sinitsyn 2021b, 111 ff.

sorted to literary sources: Edgar Allan Poe's stories (short motion picture *Toby Dammit*, 1968), Giacomo Casanova' memoirs "Story of My Life" (*The Casanova*) (*Il Casanova di Federico Fellini*, 1976), the novel "The Poem of Lunatics" by Ermanno Cavazzoni (Fellini's last film *The Voice of the Moon*). But to his 'ancient' name, Fellini has only one picture — it is his *Satyricon*, which became a unique experience of plunging into the Roman antiquity¹²⁰. And Homer is, as the saying goes, a special case... And doubts must have been in Fellini himself, in his attitude to the Homeric source, in his reminiscences of erstwhile childhood perception of the classical monuments, a special feeling of the rhythm of epic poems and, most probably, in his sacred awe of the first Poet of European culture.

Yet, the coincidences — direct or indirect, explicit or implicit — testify to the intertextual confluence of Fellini's "historical and illusory" film and the standard ancient epic. We should speak about the supreme influence of Petronius and other ancient novelists and, indirectly, — through him and others — about Homer's impact. Yet in a number of cases, Fellini recedes from the Roman origin, thereby nearing the Ancient Greek storyteller. It is not about the epic quality of *FS*, with its inherent heroism, encyclopaedic learning and magnitude (both in the sense of immensity and pomposity).

However, the identified coincidences (in a number of cases with reservations that they are indirect) may be consistent literary topoi since it has been already noted that "any story is but the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*"¹²¹. Anyway, in some places the Italian director seems to have gone by Homer, turning to advantage his themes, motifs, and art principles. We may say that in his antiquity oriented work Fellini partly managed to make one of "haunting dreams" come true, having externalized in his *Satyricon* his child's dream-game of Homeric heroes.

I admit that in respect to *FS* such a question formulation — not the *Iliad* and Fellini, but *Fellini Iliad* — is provocative. There are surely more differences than coincidences in Homer and Fellini, while the latter defy provability and they are just intuitively felt. But the afore-described parallels may be of interest for further discussion about the art of the Italian master.

¹²⁰ See Sinitsyn 2018c, 81 ff., 88 ff.; Sinitsyn 2021b, 101 ff., 118 ff.; Fellini, Chandler 2002, 191 ff.; Slavazzi 2009, 59 ff. Also about in other Fellini films, where the influence of ancient sources is possible: Sinitsyn 2020 (*Luci del varietà / Variety Lights*, 1950); Sinitsyn 2022; Sinitsyn 2024a; Sinitsyn 2024b (episode of Petronius's *Satyricon* in *Agenzia matrimoniale / Marriage Agency*).

¹²¹ Manguel 2007, 1.

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