

*Fellini's Rome: The Eternal Journey*

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In epic films set in the ancient world, an arrival in Rome typically means an imminent and significant change in political power. In epic films such as Gallone's 1937 *Scipione l'africano*, Wyler's 1959 *Ben-Hur*, Mankiewicz's 1963 *Cleopatra*, and Scott's 2000 *Gladiator*, the spectacle and pageantry of the arrival-scene typically represent the biggest, most memorable (and most expensive) part of the film. In the epic-film tradition, these scenes are also critical moments for reflecting on each film's primary thematic antithesis: republic v. empire, Christianity v. paganism, mob v. individual, spectacle v. spectator, Rome v. the world.

Several of the best-known films of Federico Fellini reveal the director's deep interest in travel (real and imaginary) to the city of Rome (*Lo sceicco bianco*, *I vitelloni*, *La dolce vita*) and in the history of films set in the ancient Roman world (*A Director's Notebook*, *Fellini Satyricon*, *Roma*). In this paper I argue that Fellini, in his approach to the idea of traveling to Rome, draws heavily on earlier cinematic representations of arrivals in the Eternal City. My primary focus is analysis of two scenes: the opening of *La dolce vita* (1960) and the monumental traffic jam outside of Rome in *Roma* (1972). First, I briefly situate these scenes in the larger history of cinematic and literary representations of trips to Rome; then, I develop the argument that Fellini set out to collapse the oversimplified antitheses typical of arrival-scenes in ancient epic films in order to represent a journey to Rome as a confusing, thrilling, but ultimately hopeless quest—for Fellini, one is always going to Rome, but one can never truly arrive.