

FEDERICO FELLINI'S 2020 CENTENNIAL SCREENINGS IN SOUTH KOREA, JAPAN, AND MAINLAND CHINA

HIJU KIM
(University of California, Los Angeles)

HIROMI KANEDA
(University of Virginia)

GAOHENG ZHANG
(University of British Columbia)

Sommario

In questo articolo esaminiamo le dinamiche storico-sociali e le rappresentazioni mediatiche delle proiezioni del centenario di Federico Fellini che hanno avuto luogo in Corea del Sud, Giappone e Cina continentale nel 2020. Esaminando vari tipi di testi mediatici in lingua coreana, giapponese e cinese, esploriamo il principale significato del centenario di Fellini e dei suoi film per gli spettatori, i critici cinematografici, gli organizzatori culturali e i partner governativi e commerciali di ciascuno dei tre Paesi dell'Asia orientale. La comprensione dei significati, sfumature e diversi livelli del cinema di Fellini raccontati da questi attori ci fornisce una finestra sulla portata dell'impegno culturale contemporaneo con Fellini, il cinema italiano e le correlazioni tra la cultura italiana e i tre Paesi asiatici. Seguendo una direzione critica che reagisce consapevolmente alla tradizione critica occidentale, speriamo di contribuire ad aprire un nuovo spazio per gli italianisti con background non tradizionali e una via di ricerca ampiamente trascurata nell'ambito degli studi transnazionali di italianistica.

Keywords: Federico Fellini's centennial, Italian mobilities, East Asia, transnational cinematic culture, digital media, Covid-19 pandemic

Introduction

In this article, we examine the socio-historical dynamics and media depictions of Federico Fellini's centennial screenings that took place in South Korea, Japan, and mainland China in 2020¹. We seek to answer several key questions surrounding this subject: Who were the organisers and what were their main agendas in staging and promoting the various retrospectives? What were the contemporary conditions of viewing and interpreting Fellini's cinema in each of these countries? How did the Covid-19 pandemic interact with the centennial celebrations? What did the attendees care about and what meanings did they derive from experiencing Fellini and his cinema as revealed in their online narratives in East Asia's vibrant digital domain? By examining various types of Korean-, Japanese-, and Chinese-language media texts, we probe the central question about what the Fellini centennial and his films meant for movie-goers, film critics, cultural organisers, and governmental and commercial partners in each of the three East Asian countries. Understanding the nuanced and multilayered meanings of Fellini's cinema as narrated by these stakeholders provides us with a window into the extent of contemporary cultural engagement with Fellini, Italian cinema, and Italian culture in the three countries.

As the subsequent sections will reveal, for decades South Korean, Japanese, and Chinese audiences and other stakeholders have been viewing, interpreting, and organising reviews of Fellini's films specifically and Italian cinema more generally. But the area of study pertaining to Italian cinematic culture in Asia has only recently garnered critical attention. Notably, the *Wiley Blackwell Companion to Federico Fellini* includes chapters on Fellini's relationship with South Asian cinemas (Niyogi De, 2020) and with Japan (Jackson, 2020). Several articles published in the *Journal of Italian Cinema and Media Studies* dealt with topics as varied as Italian neorealist cinema's influence on Chinese cineastes (Lu, 2014), Japanese animation's circulation in Italy (Pellitteri, 2019), and the making of Bollywood movies in Italy (Cucco & Scaglioni, 2014). Our essay pursues this line of inquiry by focusing on examining the eastern region of Asia, one

¹ Hiju Kim drafted the section on South Korea and the conclusion, Hiromi Kaneda wrote the section on Japan, and Gaocheng Zhang was responsible for the introduction and the section on mainland China. Zhang oversaw the collective efforts of drafting and revising.

major event involving an influential Italian film director, and media accounts that reveal specific reception narratives of selected films. While similar previous scholarship tends to study the links between Italy and a single Asian country, our article considers those pertaining to three nation-states, thereby providing a complex and comparative view of transnational flows between Italy and Asia facilitated by cinema. In so doing, we hope to reinforce the growing awareness within Italian cinema and screen scholarship of the significance of studying its Asian connections.

In relation to Italian Studies scholarship, we aim to provide a notable example of the scholarly merits of considering transnational and transcultural dimensions of Italian mobilities in Asia. The research surveyed and collected in recent volumes such as Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Stephanie Hom's *Italian Mobilities* and Charles Burdett, Loredana Polezzi, and Barbara Spadaro's *Transcultural Italies* has already forcefully argued for the necessity and values of analysing Italy from a mobility and transcultural perspective. According to the editors of the latter volume, the book "aims to show the interdependency of national and transnational, global and local, individual and community, and their impact on how we experience and narrate our lives" (Burdett, Polezzi & Spadaro, 2020:20). This stream of scholarship represents one example of decolonising and diversifying Italian Studies by placing Italy and people associated with it within dialectical relationships between history and narrative, and between the local and the global. However, substantial analyses of Asian-Italian exchanges and communications are not captured in these agenda-setting volumes, nor are they well-represented in Italian Studies scholarship as a whole. Our article will add to this existing scholarly landscape, particularly by examining primary texts written in non-European languages, thanks to the linguistic and cultural capacities of the three authors who are, however, North American Italianists by training.

Moreover, our essay also considers decolonisation and diversity by way of the critic Koichi Iwabuchi's call for the "trans-Asia as method". For the critic, this method means devising ways to "engage and tackle the issues that Asian societies share through tactical progression of trans-Asia comparison, mutual referencing, and reciprocated learning" (Iwabuchi, 2019:25). Iwabuchi means to both engage "de-Westernisation of knowledge production" and "investigate the

advancement of globalisation process that engenders cross-border flows and connections of capital, people, and media culture and renders many issues transnationally linked” (Iwabuchi, 2019:26). While each of the three East Asian countries represents a unique case study with their own specific socio-historical circumstances and media and cultural articulations, specific dimensions of the Fellini centennial screenings and related activities speak to commonalities and interactions. These aspects will be discussed in the conclusion. By following a critical direction that self-consciously reacts to the Western critical tradition, we hope to help open up a new space for Italianists with non-traditional backgrounds and a vastly under-explored avenue of research within transnational Italian Studies scholarship.

South Korea

In the year 2020, South Korea was one of the venues in East Asia for the celebrations dedicated to the centennial of Federico Fellini’s birth. Though relatively minimal in scale, in comparison to the celebrations held in Italy and in other East Asian countries, the centennial events in South Korea consisted of a number of retrospective festivals and special screenings that paid tribute to the Italian filmmaker’s artistic legacy. Due to the unforeseen Covid-19 pandemic, these celebrations were mostly restricted to small-scale exhibitions or online screenings. Public sources that should reveal the audiovisual and textual evidence of audience engagements at these events were quantitatively insufficient or unobtainable at the time of writing.

Yet, a digital landscape of Korean blogs and web portals that harboured records of Korean audiences’ interests in Fellini over the last decade offers a valuable perspective on their understanding of the director’s work. Notably, the 90th anniversary of Fellini’s birth in 2010 produced textual criticism, in-person events, and discussions, which were transcribed online. Furthermore, recent interviews featuring two internationally acclaimed Korean filmmakers, Bong Joon Ho and Park Chan Wook, as well as digital news articles and commentaries from ordinary filmgoers found on online platforms such as web portals, blogs, and social media, further attest to Fellini’s influence in South Korea in the last ten years.

Examining these digital references that were easily accessible to the general public, in this section I ask the question as to why do ordinary filmgoers, critics, and filmmakers in South Korea care about Fellini? As varied as these opinions are, Korean audiences agree that Fellini's *oeuvre* projects a wide range of themes and formal elements that generate interests based on individual preferences, such as one's emotional attentiveness to Fellini's use of visual art and music. My analysis shows that, from his treatment of social marginalisation to his incorporation of caricatures and operatic devices in his creative practice, the variety of Fellini's cinematic language has resonated with Korean critics, filmmakers and general filmgoers in its exploration of diverse political themes and aesthetic forms.

The Anticlimax of Federico Fellini's Centennial Celebrations

In 2020, South Korea held five centennial celebrations that consisted of both online and in-person screenings. Four of those events were organised by governmental agencies: the 8th Venice in Seoul Film Festival, a dance tribute to Fellini (titled "Felliniana"), Retrospectiva Fellini, and Federico Fellini's 100th Anniversary Film Festival organised by the International Tour Film Festival (ITFF). In addition, a series of commercial screenings were organised by CGV, the largest private multiplex cinema in the country. The events organised by governmental agencies were systematically sponsored by publicly funded organisations such as the Embassy of Italy, the Italian Cultural Institute in Seoul, the Seoul Metropolitan Government, Seoul Film Commission, and Seoul Art Cinema, reflecting a significant degree of cultural diplomacy between the two countries through Fellini.

These events took place intermittently throughout the year, mostly in person². In January, the 'Venice in Seoul' Film Festival took place – an event that annually brings selected films from the Venice Film Festival to Seoul. In order to highlight Fellini's 100th anniversary, the 2020 edition showcased the film *Fellini fine mai/Fellini Never-ending* (2019), a documentary directed by Eugenio Cappuccio, who was the

² In-person events included 'Venice in Seoul' Film Festival, the dance tribute, 'Retrospectiva Fellini', the Korean Film Archive's screening of *Il bidone*, and the CGV screening of *La dolce vita*. The virtual event was ITFF's online screenings, but the exhibitions of film projections and posters were in-person at two different galleries.

Assistant Director for *Ginger e Fred/Ginger and Fred* (1986) and Fellini's first feature film, *Lo sceicco bianco/The White Sheik* (1952). In March, the dance tribute to Fellini, produced by the Italian dance company Artemis Danza, was hosted by the Italian Cultural Institute (IIC) in Seoul. From June to August, the IIC also organised Retrospectiva Fellini, in collaboration with the office of the Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale. This series of events took place over the course of 20 days and screened five films by Fellini: *Intervista* (1987), *Prova d'Orchestra/Orchestra Rehearsal* (1979), *I Vitelloni* (1953), *8½* (1963), and *Giulietta degli Spiriti/Juliet of the Spirits* (1965). Finally, between November and December, the Korean Film Archive screened *Il bidone* (1955) for two days, and CGV cinemas held a special screening of a 4K restored version of *La dolce vita* (1960), also on two different dates. In December, the ITFF, which had previously toured in Russia, China, and Montenegro for Fellini's centennial, made its final stop in South Korea, where they hosted a series of free online screenings and exhibited a collection of his short films, movie posters, and a documentary at cafes inside Gallery Onue and Gallery 8th Street in Seoul.

Unfortunately, at the time of writing, the extent of the audience engagement from these events was difficult to trace because online written and audio-visual documentation about the attendees' experiences appeared to be extremely limited in scope. For example, the promotional materials by Gallery Onue, which included images of posters and still shots of Fellini's films displayed on-site, generated some passive engagement on the gallery's official social media accounts, with an average of 24 'Likes' on ONUE586's official Instagram account (2020). In order to gain a clearer picture of contemporary Korean perceptions of Fellini's cinema, we need to turn to the 90th anniversary of Fellini's birth in 2010. Seoul Art Cinema, which also organised the centennial program Retrospectiva Fellini, attracted multitudes of visitors through events that were of a much larger scale compared to 2020. This institution has also archived a collection of criticism and transcriptions of their in-person events on an official blog. In contrast with the relatively small-scale celebrations for the centennial, these 90th anniversary celebrations, which were not constrained by a global pandemic, thus served as a clearer testament to South Korea's contemporary perspectives on Fellini, helping us to peer

obliquely into the attendees' experiences with the centennial screenings.

Looking Back Even Further

To be sure, on the occasion of the 90th anniversary retrospective, many audience members left comments on social media that expressed frustration with Fellini's films. On Twitter, the hashtag #FedericoFellini written in Korean revealed posts that expressed the audience's candid opinions about Fellini's cinema, such as the 'difficulty' in watching his films or their astounding interests in other aspects of his artistry, such as "Il Viaggio di G. Mastorna Detto Fernet", a cartoon that was envisioned by Fellini but was never turned into a film (Zzziney, 2018; Hudoongjidoongahrang, 2019; mltngdwn, 2021; CHOONSAM__27, 2021). One Twitter user also commented that films like *La strada* were difficult to watch for their critique of father figures, "even through a neorealist lens", and other users on Twitter and Naver reviews simply stated that his films were "boring" (Jung, 2018; Jaelippo1, 2021). Comments from the reviews on Naver and from the 'After Talk' discussion at the 90th retrospective also made note of this tedious aspect of Fellini's films. During the in-person event, audience members noted that Fellini's films can make one "fall asleep" largely because of their lengthy duration and fragmented narratives. In contrast, attendees expressed greater interest in Fellini's personal life and in the performance of Masina, as well as in the kaleidoscopic variety of Fellini's styles and the themes that his cinematic trajectory offers overall.

However, my analysis of digital narratives of the 90th anniversary events also reveals that Korean audiences engaged fervently, not only with Fellini's most celebrated works such as *La strada* and *La dolce vita*, but also with his later productions, acknowledging the filmmaker's evolution of thematic and stylistic choices over time. An exhaustive look at Fellini's filmography offered by these events inspired Korean audiences to share a variety of views on his comic satire, depictions of women, memories from his childhood, and homage to real-life figures in literary and musical arenas such as Dante Alighieri and Maria Callas. Korean critics and audiences engaged with Fellini's depictions of

subjective memory and his use of multiple art forms far more often than his treatment of meta-cinematic narrative techniques.

These views can be gleaned from various types of digital materials deposited at Seoul Art Cinema's official blog, which boasted critical reviews of 22 films directed by Fellini as well as considerable photographic and textual documentations of in-person events. During an 'After Talk' discussion session held among ordinary filmgoers on the last day of the 90th anniversary retrospective, we witness brief but varied opinions on both Fellini's political stance and his filming techniques (Hulot, 2010). Titled 'Fellini, an Ode to Clowns,' this event invited interested audience members to convene and share their thoughts on Fellini's cinema, with individual essays written about Fellini's visual styles as well as his differentiation from other Italian neorealist filmmakers (Hulot, 2010). A viewer presented an essay on how Fellini's cinematic language emphasises "fantasy over realism" and focuses on the inner lives of Italians during the post-World War II period, in contrast to the social realism and a specific vision of the future of Italian society proposed and critiqued by previous Italian neorealists³. Relatedly, several filmgoers commented on Giulietta Masina's performance as the character Gelsomina in *La strada*, with one viewer stating that simply recalling her facial expressions brought them to tears. They concurred that the filmmaker's obvious love for the circus was generative for his film art, the endings of his films are striking and "sad" given their impression of "death", and reflections on his personal memories were given expression through cinema (Seoul Art Cinema, 2010).

The above perspectives from Seoul Art Cinema echoed the reviews of Fellini's films in the film section on Naver, the largest web portal and database in South Korea. This parallel demonstrated the consistency among Korean audiences' inclination toward their emotional engagement with Masina's performance and Fellini's non-linear modes of storytelling. One reviewer for *Amarcord* writes that Fellini's cinema significantly differed from others in cinematic history because he represented his memories "warmly", through a fragmented storytelling, rather than through an "intricate narrative" to move his audiences (Naver, 2008). The same reviewer adds that Fellini

³ This and subsequent translations from Korean to English are by Hiju Kim.

nonetheless incorporated a diverse range of themes such as “the misdirected sexual desire of adolescent males, brutality of administrators, the extremism of fascism, an emotionally drained, dysfunctional family, [and] the insanity of women and men’s antisocial behaviours” throughout his career (Naver, 2008). On an emotive note, the reviewer ends this entry by talking about plans to play the piece “Gelsomina” from *La strada* on the saxophone that night. The account also mentions how the person wept while watching “Gelsomina’s wrinkled face” on television while Fellini was receiving the honorary award at the Academy Awards a year before his death (Naver, 2008). These reviews reflected a highly emotional engagement with Fellini’s films in general and with Giulietta Masina’s striking performance in *La strada*, thereby once again stressing the director’s personal treatment of various themes through visual art and music.

During the 90th retrospective, Seoul Art Cinema sponsored four lectures, representing the variety of angles from which audiences can engage with Fellini’s films on diverse historical and aesthetic levels. One was on Fellini’s specific incorporations of visual art and fashion in *Satyricon*, another on Fellini and Italian neorealism, another on Fellini and modernity, and another on Fellini’s relationship with opera, as expressed in *E la nave va/And the Ship Sails On* (1983). Through these lectures, the presenters focused on the specificity of Fellini’s cinema, his formal distance from archetypal Italian neorealist films like Vittorio De Sica’s *Ladri di biciclette/Bicycle Thieves*, his affinity for the circus, and the transgressive and subversive modes of depicting the female body and religious objects. During the talk on opera, critic Han Chang Ho relayed Fellini’s biographical details instead of focusing on the work itself through a formal analysis. For example, with *E la nave va/And the Ship Sails On*, Han recalled the film’s homage to the Greek soprano Maria Callas and how Fellini began to appreciate opera during the years of his later productions. Han made keen observations on Fellini’s attention to music, opera, and other forms of art, which were also elaborated in his published volume on Italian cinema and opera with a reference to Fellini.

Han’s other criticisms of Fellini’s cinema were also available for consultation on digital platforms. In 2015, Han also published a series of essays called ‘Han Chang Ho’s Trip to Italia’ on the online film journal *Cine21*, which was designed to take readers on an essayistic tour

through Rimini and Rome with references to Italian films. With Fellini's films, Han narrated the director's estranged relationship with Rome as an outsider from Rimini, noting the sense of disillusionment delineated in *Lo sceicco bianco/The White Sheik* and the scenes portraying marginalised prostitutes and themes of poverty in *Le notti di Cabiria/The Nights of Cabiria*. Contrary to any rose-colored descriptions of Italy as one might expect in an essay that connotes a "trip" to a particular country, Han describes a journey that disillusiones his readers of picturesque scenery by critiquing the comments of Charles Dickens who once described Italy as "dirty, poor, and loud" (Han, 2015). Instead of rebuking such negative perceptions on Italy, Han underscored the irony that Fellini had very much intended to recreate such an image of Rome as a "chaotic and squalid city" in a film such as *Le notti di Cabiria/The Nights of Cabiria*. Instead of romanticising notions of traveling, Han used the online platform to discuss Fellini's biographical details and his honest portrayals of Rome with cinema as a personal lens to the city (Han, 2015).

Korean Filmmakers' Discourse on Fellini

Internationally acclaimed Korean directors, Bong Joon Ho and Park Chan Wook, have shown an interest in Fellini by selecting their favourite Fellini films and paralleling them with other works found in Italian cinema or with their own. While some similarities could be found between Bong's and Fellini's films, Park explicitly distanced his style from Fellini's, stressing the otherness and incomparability of Fellini's films as the very reasons for his admiration for the Italian director. Following his critical success with *Parasite* (2019), Bong mentioned in an interview during the 19th Florence Korea Film Fest in 2021 that *Amarcord* and *Le notti di Cabiria* were his favourite Fellini films, while expressing his reverence for the history of Italian cinema overall (RB Casting, 2021). In mentioning Luchino Visconti's *Rocco e i suoi fratelli/Rocco and his Brothers* (1960), Bong remarked that the domestic migration of an impoverished family from southern Italy to start a new life elsewhere was similar to the themes portrayed in his own *Parasite* (RB Casting, 2021). Meanwhile, Bong's selection of his favourite Fellini films startled a few ordinary filmgoers online, as an anonymous user on *Extreme Movie* (a Korean website dedicated to

discussing cinema) commented that they were surprised to see how *8½*, a film that harbours the “agony of filmmaking”, could not make the Korean auteur’s list of favourite Fellini films (ItalianaMobstar, 2021). In these comments, Bong gravitates towards Fellini’s films that stress nostalgia for his hometown and marginalised female figures, such as those in *Amarcord* and *Le notti di Cabiria*, underscoring his admiration for Fellini’s personal and sentimental engagement with thematic elements rather than his meta-cinematic explorations as an acclaimed film auteur.

Back in 2010, Park Chan Wook, the director of the 2003 Cannes Grand Prix winner *Oldboy*, had a conversation with film critics Jung Sung Il and Hur Moon Young for *Cine21*, during which they discussed Fellini’s cinematic style (Moonseok, 2010). During the conversation, Jung revealed that Park met him at the Seoul Art Center earlier that day to watch Fellini’s *Città delle donne/City of Women* together (Cine21, 2010). The critic then asked for Park’s thoughts on Fellini, for he assumed that the director would not have asked someone to watch a Fellini film together simply as a fan. In addressing this question, Park emphasised the difference between Fellini’s films and his own, which was the very cause for his awe and curiosity directed at the Italian filmmaker. Park said of Fellini: “Fellini is someone who is very different from me. No, he is actually someone from the completely opposite side of my world. My favourite Fellini film is *Amarcord*, but I don’t think I can ever make a film like that for the life of me. I guess I get curious, because he is so different. I like Sam Peckinpah and Robert Aldrich’s films because they are familiar to me, but Fellini’s world is very different” (Cine21, 2010).

Further to this comment, critic Jung Sung Il discussed the role of “personal taste” when it comes to cinephiles while using Fellini’s filmography as an example. Jung, who provided the audio commentary for *8½* released as part of a Korean DVD set called *Retrospective Collection Vol. 1* (2003), elaborated on Fellini’s trajectory, from starting out as a director during the prolific era of Italian neorealism, to moving onto modernist aesthetics in his later years. With the remark that “anybody can create a different portrait of Fellini from any point in his career”, Jung used Fellini’s *oeuvre* as a case study to determine a true ‘cinephile’: “If someone were to tell me that they like ‘all of Fellini’s films,’ and if that person were a film scholar, then I would

immediately lose interest in them. If they were a cinephile, I'd be suspicious" (Cine21, 2010). Jung's comment reflects not so much his distaste for Fellini's films as his emphasis on one's "personal taste" being crucial to his definition of a 'cinephile', while recognising the heterogeneity of Fellini's filmography (Cine21, 2010).

In this vein, critic Hur then remarked that his favourite Fellini films were his earlier works, such as *Le notti di Cabiria* and *La dolce vita*, and Park mentioned that *Le notti di Cabiria* had left quite an impression on his assistant directors and actors for *Crush and Blush* (2008), a film directed by Lee Kyoung Mi and produced by Park. The film portrays a female protagonist who has difficulty in securing a romantic relationship, all the while suffering from a chronic case of extreme hot flashes. Indeed, a general similarity can be found between the protagonist and the street-smart and spiritually pure Cabiria, the female protagonist in *Le notti di Cabiria*. As these selections show, Korean filmmakers and the critics have emphasised Fellini's attention to marginalised individuals and communities, which have resonated with their own production teams, while recognising the differences that serve as additional sources of inspiration.

Tracking Back to the Centennial

Despite Fellini's films being a 'matter of taste' based on the above discussions, these interviews were later deployed by organisers to encourage ordinary filmgoers to engage virtually with the centennial celebrations in 2020. On Studio Gwangkki, a Naver video channel that provided the digital platform for the ITFF celebration in Korea, host Lee Gwang Ki and critic Hong Seok Hwa promoted the event through a brief, informal conversation, during which they mentioned Bong's selection of Fellini's works as two of his all-time favourite films (Gwangkki Channel, 2020). While they regretted the necessity of digital means to experience the films due to the pandemic, the two interlocutors heavily stressed Bong's preference for Fellini's films to promote their own centennial event. Given Bong's influential presence in Korean cinema for both domestic and international audiences, the organisers remarked that their viewers "would understand why the director had chosen such films by Fellini" once they watched the documentary *Fellini & L'Alter Ego* directed by Graziano Marraffa, a

film that was uploaded on Studio Gwangkki as part of their event (Gwangkki Channel, 2020).

In sum, South Korean audiences engaged with a variety of angles offered by Fellini's films, including the performance of his wife and muse, Masina, and his use of music and locations, based largely on Fellini's own personal engagement with various artistic media and the city of Rome. As these online reviews, comments, interviews, and past celebrations show, the debates surrounding Fellini's creative mixture of art forms and genres have inspired South Korean audiences to make emotional connections with his films based on their varied interests in the cinematic as well as extra-cinematic elements of music and opera. Rather than blindly taking an interest in Fellini's entire *oeuvre*, or merely his most well-known hits, audiences at large expressed their admiration for Fellini's diverse essayistic styles throughout his artistic career, making note of the differences between Fellini's art and other examples found in Italian and Korean cinema.

Japan

In Tokyo, Japan, to inaugurate this "Fellinian Year," the Italian Cultural Institute and the Mermaid Film organised a special screening of *8½* on Fellini's centennial birthday, 20 January, 2020. During the inauguration, Paolo Calvetti, then the Institute's director, announced two main events meant to celebrate the centennial of Federico Fellini. The first event, called the Italian Film Festival (イタリア映画祭, 2020), was sponsored by the Istituto Luce Cinecittà, the Italian Embassy in Tokyo, the Italian Cultural Institute, and the Asahi Newspaper, a major newspaper in the country. The festival was originally scheduled to screen several Fellini's films during the Japanese holiday week called "Golden Week" from 29 April to 3 May. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Italian Film Festival was postponed to November and December and adopted a hybrid mode of screening. Only the first hundred people, who applied beforehand, watched some of the films in person at the Italian Cultural Institute and paid no fees. The rest of the public could watch the movies on an online platform, promptly made by the Asahi Newspaper. As a consequence of this delay, Fellini's films were removed from the program because, by that time, the second event announced by Calvetti had already shown

Fellini's films. The second and main event was the "100 Years of Federico Fellini" (生誕 100 年フェデリコ・フェリーニ映画祭), sponsored by the Istituto Luce Cinecittà and the Mermaid Film in collaboration with seven film companies, including COPIAPOA Film, Culture Entertainment, Fujifilm, WOWOWPlus, Field Works, KADOKAWA, and Incontro. Scheduled from 31 July to 20 August at Yebisu Garden Cinema, the event included nine films: *The White Sheik*, *I vitelloni*, *La strada*, *Il bidone*, *Nights of Cabiria*, *La dolce vita*, *8½*, *Juliet of the Spirits*, and *Amarcord*. Eight films were screened in a 4K digital remastered version restored by the Italian film studio Cinecittà, which were unveiled in this enhanced format for the first time in Japan (only *La strada* was screened in a 2K digital remastered version).

The centennial celebration was a "cross-border dialogue," (Iwabuchi 2018:2) as Iwabuchi would have called it, showing how to foster diversity, inclusion, and equity in this global mobility and transnational culture. Examining the Fellini centennial celebrations in Japan, in this section, I first analyse how the Italian government and cultural organisations, together with Tokyo's local institutions, played a decisive role in the organisation of the retrospectives. Secondly, through my investigation of the social media responses, my analysis shows that Fellini's films had a profound impact and elicited a strong emotional response among Japanese moviegoers particularly, and surprisingly, with male viewers.

Significant coordination between Italy and Japan had to take place in order for this event to happen. The proposal of organising the "100 years of Federico Fellini" came from the Istituto Luce Cinecittà, as Nobuo Murata, representative of Mermaid Film and film director of 「恋する男」 (*A Man in Love*) (Murata, 2020)⁴, stated in the online presentation before the screenings at the Tokyo International Film Festival. They started to coordinate almost three years in advance, anticipating an excellent success for both Italy and Japan. Cinecittà, thanks to the support of Gucci and other Italian organisations, restored 4K digital remastered versions of Fellini's films, which were presented to the Japanese public for the first time. Writer and translator Taro Okamoto was in charge of the translations of the subtitles for this occasion. In an interview at the "Autumn Festa 2019" hosted by the

⁴ Hiromi Kaneda translated this section's quotes from Japanese to English.

Japan-Italy Association, he said: “Fellini is one of the most beloved filmmakers in the world and in Italy. He is great not only because of his films, but also as a unique and irreplaceable genius” (Kōeki zaidanhōjin nichiiikyōkai, 2020). At the online presentation that preceded the screenings at the Tokyo International Film Festival, Okamoto recounted the difficulties of rewriting the subtitles of all nine films from Italian into Japanese. He said that each script was very dense and full of different meanings, and to capture these nuances in Japanese took him much thinking. He spent a significant amount of time watching and rewatching each film in order to grasp the real meaning of each word and to translate accurately for the Japanese audience. Okamoto said that it was arduous work; however, in the end, he felt well accomplished once he finished the translations.

The organising committee put an impressive amount of effort into promoting these screenings, which were held in person despite the pandemic. For the “100 years of Federico Fellini,” the Japanese and Italian organisations made an official website, which included a long list of cities and theatres where the screenings took place – in such major cities as Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto as well as small towns and suburbs throughout Japan. My take on this comprehensive promotion is that the event’s public relations committee intended to reach out to remote locations in Japan in order to expose the local populations to Italian culture, art, and cities, and to allow them to travel at least virtually, since the pandemic closed the borders between countries. Another purpose was to promote the fascination that the Japanese have always had for Italy and Italian products. In fact, *La dolce vita*, which displays many scenic views of Rome and fashion design, was the only one of the nine film selections that was included in every program planned in the various parts of the country. A short video promotion showcased still shots from all nine films in the program with some of the well-known soundtracks in the background. (Moviecollecitonjp, 2020). This promotion video was posted on many cinema theatres and Fellini’s fan websites and social media.

Despite the pandemic, fans of Fellini’s cinema still flocked to the screenings in person, and tickets were sold-out in many theatres. The fact that the tickets were sold out is a positive sign of the success of the “100 Years of Federico Fellini”. Based on the success of this event, the Japanese and Italian institutions wanted to examine the possibility of

creating another more significant event on Fellini to show all his works. However, in the online presentation of 100 years of Fellini's birthday at the Tokyo International Film Festival, the film director Nobuo Murata explained that for some reason, the Istituto Luce Cinecittà was not so thrilled about this project because such an event would require extensive organisation and time.

The "100 years of Federico Fellini" event can be understood within the broader context of contemporary Japanese-Italian commercial, political, and cultural relations. The Italian Cultural Institute (IIC) in Tokyo promoted this event to strengthen the relationship between Italy and Japan. When Calvetti was first appointed as the new director of the IIC in 2016, he stated in the interview released by the Ca' Foscari University of Venice:

Among the activities of greatest impact of the IIC is definitely **teaching Italian**. There is also, for example, a major **film festival**, organised in collaboration with one of the most highly followed media platforms. I intend to continue to enhance the most 'classic activities' related to cinema, art, and literature, whilst also working on the production of more cultural activities related to the world of production, such as **fashion** and **design**. The IIC must act as a **coordinator for cultural initiatives** and a **magnet for economic fabrics**. It is important to enhance and promote some of our **technological skills**, such as those that apply to the restoration and digitisation of cultural heritage. I am also planning a collaboration with RAI for the release of documentaries on these issues.

(Calvetti, 2016. Bold is Calvetti's)

Calvetti's program to enhance the relationship between the two countries through culture, fashion, and technological know-how refers back to the 1866 Treaty of Friendship and Commerce between Japan and Italy. The two countries had a long history that began with the commercial tie of the silkworm egg trade. This exchange was crucial for both parties because it was a source of foreign currency for Japan and a relief from the silkworm breeding crisis for Italy.

Indeed, commercial trade, political cooperation, and cultural exchange between Italy and Japan have been intense in the post-World War Two period. The Italian Chamber of Commerce in Japan (ICCJ) is an association of companies and entrepreneurs founded in Tokyo in 1972 to help promote trade between Italy and Japan, which was officially recognised by Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1986. Part of the *Assocamerestero* (Association of Chambers of Commerce Abroad), the ICCJ actively maintains commercial relations and collaborations with 79 Italian Chambers in 54 countries. The ICCJ organises events and seminars throughout the year, providing information and advice to help the members better understand the markets of interest or develop marketing strategies. Many of these events expose Japan's mass culture, tradition, and art in Italy, and vice versa. Thanks in part to the ICCJ's efforts, nowadays, Japan appreciates "Made in Italy" products similar to how Italy lauds "Made in Japan". However, the relationship between the two nations is not restricted to economy and trade. Japan and Italy also participate in political meetings such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which "is an international organisation that works to build better policies for better lives" with a goal "to shape policies that foster prosperity, equality, opportunity, and well-being for all" (OECD, 2011). For this reason, over the years, there have been numerous official visits of Japanese politicians to Italy and vice versa.

In order to better understand the public perception of Fellini's centennial and his films in Japan, I examine several Twitter comments and blogs written by moviegoers and fans of the director. Several moviegoers posted on Twitter pictures of the programs of the "100 years of Federico Fellini" screenings in their places of residence, thereby demonstrating their pride in having the event held in their small towns or provinces. These comments and blogs reveal the profound effect that Fellini's films had on a wide cross-section of Japanese society.

When reading the comments on Twitter, it is interesting to note that many Japanese men had a strong reaction *La strada*. One man shared that *La strada* was a special film for him. In his interpretation, there is a big and strong man, a small woman, and a fool in the film. Everyone is selfish, kind, and cruel. Watching the film, it is possible to feel joy and despair at the same time. These feelings make the film so unique

for this viewer, which he considers to be the reason why *La strada* is loved by many. He also suggested that if the festival's organisation were to conduct a survey among the attendees of the screenings, *La strada* would probably have been ranked as their top favourite movie. Another man tried to invite his wife to join him at the movie theatre, but he decided to go alone since they had different hobbies. This viewer wrote that he watched *La strada* so many times that it was impossible to keep count, and that he cried at the same scenes every time. He was also delighted to watch it on a big screen. He noticed that the flow of the story moved quicker than he thought and felt that ultimately it was a very human story like a fairy tale. All the comments above demonstrate how *La strada* resonated with the public. The screening of the film enabled the spectators to reflect on their own life and somehow enact a cathartic mode that helped them appreciate their own life. It is impressive that many Japanese men were open about their feelings on social media such as Twitter on this occasion. Primarily as a matter of male gender, Japanese culture is known for being very quiet and for hiding their emotions. The fact that many people had to stay at home during the pandemic might have created a shift in their behaviour.

Professors, actors, and other film directors were invited to lecture during Fellini's centennial retrospective so that the Japanese public had an opportunity to hear, interact, and learn from them. If it had not been for the border closure, Italian experts on Fellini's works might have also been invited for public talks. A filmgoer shared what he learned during a lecture delivered by Dr. Atsushi Okada, a Japanese historian of western art and Professor Emeritus at Kyoto University and Professor at Kyoto Seika University: "As a Catholic, in Fellini's view, while criticising the dogmatism, he put an idealistic faith in the ability of film to express festive, ingenious, and magical moments. [Prof. Okada] mentioned that their existence is a part of Fellini's creative attitude". Having these Q&A sessions helped to clarify some possible interpretations of the films, according to this Twitter user.

Relevant Twitter comments point to another successful screening, that of *8½*, which was shown in Tokyo and in other parts of Japan. A statement said: "In the carnivalesque film that creates the anguished filmmaker Guido, delusion and reality come and go, and the experience is too cult-like for it to be considered comedy and sci-fi. In this film by Director Fellini, I even loved the suffering of art creation and I felt that

I could enjoy life and say so. Life is a party". In sharing a similar sentiment, many other filmgoers simply posted the famous quote from Mastroianni in the last scene: "È una festa la vita, viviamola insieme! / 人生は祭だ共に生きよう". ("Life is a party, so let's live it together!") This message of enjoying life as it unfolds is a very compelling idea for the Japanese audience because Japanese people are typically tied to live a life respectful of rituals and tradition. It is difficult for the Japanese to become accustomed to an everyday life where they can reveal their true feelings. In Japanese culture, the word 建前 (*tatemae*) means façade, which is juxtaposed to 本音 (*honne*), which means true feelings. Typically, the Japanese follow socially-accepted standards and practice *tatemae* to maintain their public image. Widely shared by the Japanese, this duality is meant to maintain harmony in the society so that things can go smoothly without any clash, a concept which the westerners often misunderstand as a form of hypocrisy. Overall, these Twitter comments are excellent examples of transculturality, where Japanese viewers found an emotional outlet in Fellini's films and Italian culture in general to express their feelings without fearing the pressure of society.

In conclusion, this analysis of Fellini's Centennial in Japan shows how this event showcased the growing Italian-Japanese ties over a century and how both parties put in much effort to maintain and deepen ongoing political, economic, and cultural relationships. Even though the Covid-19 pandemic was still present, the "sold-out" signs in multiple theatres testified not only to the success of the event but also reinforced the interest of the Japanese public in Fellini's works. Through social media, online presentations, and interviews, this Japanese case study communicates popular and important messages about the Japanese audience's perceptions of Italian culture and its transculturality.

China

Under the aegis of China Film Archive (CFA), and in collaboration with the Italian Embassy and the Italian Cultural Institutes (ICI) in China, as well as Italy's Cineteca Nazionale (national film library), Bologna's Cineteca, and Cinecittà, a series of screenings were organised and promoted with a Chinese-English-Italian title:

“费德里科·费里尼百年诞辰纪念放映 / Ciao! Federico
Fellini: A Retrospective / Ciao, Federico! Rassegna
retrospettiva per il centenario di Federico Fellini.”

As CFA's English-language announcement boasts, the October and November 2020 version in Beijing presented a “luxurious programming list [that] includes 19 most important films of Fellini representing different periods of his whole creation and three shorts related to his art to review the magnificent cinema life of this genius in the world film history” (CFA 2020). In November and December, eight representative works were then screened in-person in Suzhou, Changsha, Xiamen, Chengdu, and Guangzhou. CFA's Chinese-language release about these events highlights the rarity of public screenings of Fellini's films in China and the “intimate, magnificent, and dream-like” quality of his cinematic world, which “has inspired countless cineastes, profoundly changing people's ways of viewing films” (Li, 2020)⁵.

The above communiqués represent two tendencies within the promotion of Italian cultural events in contemporary mainland China. In Beijing, the nation's political and cultural capital and a critical geopolitical location in today's world order, the events were intended to showcase Italy not only to Chinese people, but, more crucially, also to foreigners living there, using the city as a stage on which to display Italy's cultural heritage and prestige. In China's other major cities, the events were meant to capture the interest of the local elites often through putting Italian culture on a pedestal, a practice favoured by the ICIs and the Italian Trade Agency (ICE, Istituto nazionale per il commercio estero), the official organisations and the driving forces behind the promotional efforts. Thus, the cultural articulation of official Italy in China operates both in a global theatre, which is provided by Beijing's increasingly prominent international stature, and at a local level, seeping into the Chinese elites' cultural consciousness and becoming integrated into their cultural repertoires.

Focused on Fellini's centennial in China, this section will only probe the latter, Chinese side of the story: What did the centennial's promoters and Chinese audiences each care about Fellini? Why and how did these

⁵ Gaoheng Zhang translated this section's direct quotes from Chinese into English.

kinds of reception come about? I answer these questions by examining and juxtaposing relevant news coverage by or concerning the organisers and their commercial partners, as well as social media posts by moviegoers. The conversation that I stage between the two types of popular media texts helps form a more rounded view of the reception and appreciation of an Italian artist in China. This is a key example of the transculturation of Italian cultural assets and imaginations in a country which has become a primary market for “Made in Italy” products.

The abovementioned five-city retrospective attracted extensive news coverage, thereby providing us an overview of what the promoters and journalists believed would draw audiences to the screenings. To start, we may observe specific tendencies in the coverage which must have originated from a same source provided by 保利文化集团 / Poly Culture Group, the Chinese company that hosted the centennial in its own movie theatres in these cities (Poly Group, 2020). This body of texts often recommends Fellini by concisely summarising the accolades that he received during his lifetime, such as the film prizes, while displaying images of film posters and the exhibitions that were created for the centennial in China in the theatres. Some coverage also places Fellini within the larger context of European film traditions, calling him, Ingmar Bergman, and Andrei Tarkovsky “the Holy Trinity” of modern art cinema (Cong, 2020). Some journalists referred to Fellini as an auteur, praising his unique film style and philosophy, which are said to articulate his thoughts about society, life, and human nature (Tencent, 2020). Moreover, when appropriate, journalists mentioned existing Italian connections in these cities, which the centennial presumably would enhance. For example, when covering the retrospective in Changsha, 中国新闻社 / China News Service, an important state-owned news agency that traditionally serves Chinese overseas, highlights 华谊兄弟(长沙)电影小镇, a planned town financed by the Huayi Brothers Media Group for both filmmaking and tourism, where a full-scale Italian-style small town based on urban elements of Venice and Assisi is featured (Tian, 2020). In Suzhou, the retrospective took place in conjunction with the city’s so-called “International Day”, which highlighted Italy that year (Chai, 2021). Celebrating the 40th anniversary of the year in which Suzhou and Venice became sister cities

thanks to their reputations as renowned water towns East and West, the events exhibited Italian and Chinese arts and crafts and Italian lifestyle products (Chai, 2021). Finally, in cooperation with other entities or on their own, the various ICIs also organised screenings of Fellini's films in other major cities. For film lovers and professionals alike, both the Hong Kong International Film Festival (HKIFF, 2020) and the Shanghai International Film Festival (SIFF) (SIFF, 2020) dedicated special programs to review Fellini's *oeuvre*, and the ICI Shanghai helped create an "Italian Film Retrospective" in both Shanghai (IICS, 2021) and Hangzhou (DaWuDing, 2021).

Arguably, the above media coverage of the retrospective did not demonstrate much specificity relating either to the centennial or to China. This news production could be applied to a Fellini retrospective in any given year and at any place with little substantive change. However, one media frame was indeed special for the year 2020 in China: the establishment of diplomatic relations between Italy and the People's Republic of China celebrated its 50th anniversary. Unlike events surrounding Fellini's centennial in Japan and South Korea, for example, Chinese journalism that promoted the screenings frequently used this frame. The celebrations were significant at several levels. For one, Italy was the first G7 country and the most significant Western power in 2019 to have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with China with the intent of furthering bilateral and multilateral cooperation within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI, 2013-Present). Although no significant projects on Italian soil have been finalised at the time of writing, and although the MoU is not a binding document that guarantees specific commercial agreements, the symbolic weight of the signing represented a clear victory for China. Consider also the Covid-19 pandemic, which affected China first in February, and which then caused Italy to be the first worst hit European country in March. The Chinese were proud of the many subsequent national and civic aid programs and display of support between the two countries. (CGTN, 2020a & 2020b) Finally, because of the pandemic, most of the scheduled celebration activities were moved online. In particular, the Year of Culture and Tourism Italy-China (中意文化和旅游年 / Anno della Cultura e del Turismo Italia-Cina), which was inaugurated in January, had to be postponed. The initiative would have

further promoted the existing cultural and tourist mobilities between the two countries through exhibitions, concerts, performances, and lectures (Lin, 2020; Consulate General of Italy in Chongqing, 2020).

These circumstances accentuated one of the few occasions for in-person interactions scheduled for the celebrations: Fellini's centennial screenings, which took place in late 2020, when the restrictions on holding public events had already been lifted in China. In summing up its contributions to the retrospective, Poly Culture Group's news release twice mentions a "Cinematic Silk Road" (Poly Culture, 2020). In the past, Fellini's work supposedly followed this route to reach China, which, once again in 2020, film lovers would "collectively construct" in order to "further Chinese-Italian friendship and disseminate film culture" (Poly Culture, 2020). Even though no mention is made in the text of Fellini's early appreciation in China, the informed reader likely thinks of the screenings of neorealist films on Chinese television channels. For example, when introducing the emergence and development of neorealism on the website of China Movie Channel, the CCTV-6 (China Central Television), the text uses Fellini's *Le notti di Cabiria/Nights of Cabiria* (1957) as a classic neorealist movie and *Roma* (1972) as an example of the director's innovation in neorealism (XiaoYu, 2002). Poly Culture Group resorted to this knowledge of Italian cinema in China but updated it with a new coinage according to the current political discourse (Poly Culture, 2020). "Cinematic Silk Road" is a prominent example of coining new terms based on the "Silk Road" including the "Maritime Silk Road" and the "Digital Silk Road", both of which are used by the Chinese official authorities. Following a logic proposed by the BRI narratives, which often exalt its role in rejuvenating and expanding the ancient Silk Road, the company stresses how it helped strengthen the "Cinematic Silk Road". Overall, by aligning itself with the BRI through this coinage, Poly Culture Group tapped into the momentum created by the 2019 MoU, which was viewed as solidifying the diplomatic ties between the two nations.

Culled from widely available digital news sources, the media texts that I have examined so far provide us with an understanding of the most important qualities of Fellini's cinema that the organisers and promoters conveyed to the public. But such news accounts did not register moviegoers' reactions to, and reviews of, the screenings. In order to probe this dimension in order to contrast it with official

announcements, I examine specific social media posts from 新浪微博 / Sina Weibo (2009-Present), a popular microblogging service and one of China's most successful social media platforms. I focus on Sina Weibo users who are arts and film enthusiasts, but who do not present themselves as academic experts of film studies or Fellini's cinema.

Several Fellini fans from Beijing remarked on the substantial time that they invested in attending the retrospective. In particular, they showed off photographs of the (almost complete) series of tickets of individual films that they purchased, with one ticket stacked on top of another and with the film titles shown prominently (James Yue 1998, 2020; woodooxp, 2020). Sina Weibo bloggers widely adopt such a strategy of messaging accentuation, which is visually expressed as a collection of images on a single theme. A user lamented how she was only able to secure an entrance to *I clowns/The Clowns* (1970) during the SIFF in Shanghai, even though she would have wanted to see *La dolce vita* (1960) and *Amarcord* (1973) again on the silver screen. But this blogger made the best out of the screening by furthering her understanding of Fellini's passion for clowns through posting several carefully-selected images (御宅之神 lulu2, 2020). One image offers a synopsis of *I clowns* and clarifies the role of the circus in Fellini's *oeuvre*; two images of clowns captured from the film are presented; in another film image, Charlie Chaplin's daughter poses as a clown; and another image depicts Fellini's wife and the actor Masina as a circus clown in *La strada* (1954). Prompted by the centennial, some Chinese users reflected on their interactions with Fellini's cinema without going to the retrospective screenings. One blogger apparently only attended a screening of *La dolce vita*, likely outside of the official retrospectives in the designated cities, but shared several photographs displaying Chinese dishes consumed in restaurants in November, in a humorous reference to the good life that the film depicts (索尔格, 2020). Exhibiting a square of six headshots in the post, another blogger attached a link to an article that introduces the lives and major works of several Italian male filmmakers, including Franco Zeffirelli, Fellini, Sergio Leone, Michelangelo Antonioni, Bernardo Bertolucci, Gabriele Salvatores, Dario Argento, and Giuseppe Tornatore (奢望之旅, 2020). The blogger intended the post and the article to convey an appreciation

both for the patience needed to understand the depth of Fellini's cinema and for the new experiences that Italian cinema brings to the viewer.

These examples of a specific visual and digital technique allowed by Sina Weibo illustrate Chinese moviegoers' varied, dedicated, creative, and even critical engagement with Fellini's films, thereby demonstrating aspects of the transculturation of his cinematic art in China. In the last example mentioned above, this transculturation is expressed in cinematic terms, as the post displays good general knowledge of Italian cinema. Consider also that the fact of fans attempting to attend all the screenings of Fellini's retrospective in Beijing is indicative of a cineaste behaviour which, after the disruption of the Cultural Revolution, was imported from the West via other east Asian countries and regions. These Chinese cinephiles embraced the fandom culture and the film club tradition. Moreover, the Sina Weibo posts showcase the interactions between China's vibrant digital culture, which is nurtured by new media, and Fellini's films, products of an audio-visual technology before the advent of the Internet. Coming out of a prolonged pandemic, which in many Chinese cities lasted eight months, the audience were eager to be physically present in the theatres to enjoy films made for the big screen. While the theatre experience and Fellini's films are inherited from an era when new media was unknown, most copies used for the official screenings presented the 4K restored versions with the help of current digital technologies and the moviegoers relayed their thoughts and emotions on social media. Such a productive tension between cinema and new media is beautifully illustrated by a Sina Weibo post that features a video blog, or vlog, that commemorates the blogger's trips to seven screenings in Beijing (吉兹末 Gizmo, 2020). The 3.5-minute long vlog simulates a black and white movie with shots likely captured by way of the author's smart phone. The vlog's *mise-en-scène* takes place in four locations: the theatre's reception hall populated by the many attendees; a dog was featured in a garden just outside the theatre; in the screening hall, the author captured a partially darkened clip of the final scene of *Le notti di Cabiria*, said to be her favourite; and at the blogger's home, she showed books about Fellini that she owned and recommended. With background music selected mostly from *La dolce vita*, the vlog conjures a feel of Fellini's casual and free-flowing aesthetics.

Transculturality is also articulated in relation to viewers' musings about Chinese society after screenings. The figures of the clown and the circus provide a specific lens through which to think about the social and human plights that one faces when living in one of the most prosperous and mobile eras in Chinese history. For another example in this connection, one post contemplates what the blogger believes to be a depiction in *I vitelloni* (1953) of restless and lost young men who live in a small town, and it questions the credo that restricted social milieus necessarily mean "yokes" presumably on the townspeople (lit_forest, 2020). Thus, *I vitelloni* provides a springboard for Chinese viewers to probe the tremendous consequences that vigorous domestic migration from the countryside to the cities, particularly since the 2000s, has caused in both the rural communities and the urban centers. Are "love, loyalty, and responsibility" more important than the pursuit of a better economic and modern life in big cities? (lit_forest, 2020).

Finally, transculturation of Fellini's art may also be oriented towards individual personal lives, of which the culinary-related good life described above is an example. Revisiting *Le notti di Cabiria* during the centennial screening in Guangzhou, a blogger relayed his emotions and a sense of nostalgia, which were enhanced by the company of a cinema studies student currently enrolled in the same university from which he graduated (Blonde 小朴时态, 2020). According to him, Fellini's characteristic narrative and cinematic language made him weep because he was reminded of the days when he grew intellectually and watched this and other films as a student. He experienced bittersweet emotions brought on by the deeper understanding of the Fellini films that he now possesses. For this blogger, the centennial became an acknowledgement of his growth as a young man.

As this section's analysis shows, the centennial's promoters engaged the news media mainly through the frames of the international stature of Fellini, the diffusion of "Made in Italy" products and lifestyle in China, and the 50th anniversary of Italian-Chinese diplomatic ties. As a juxtaposition, on social media, non-expert but educated moviegoers responded to Fellini's films in a variety of ways specific to their subjective positionalities and experiences, which seemed minimally connected with the official frames. More generally, by approaching the Chinese case study from both the official perspective adopted by the organisers and the perspectives of civil society and its members, I also

demonstrate the complexity of Italian-related transcultural phenomenon in China.

Conclusion

In South Korea, Japan, and China, Fellini's centennial celebrations prompted a retrospection of the director's legacies, in part accompanied by historical commemorations of each country's cultural and political relations with Italy. To highlight Fellini, commercial and governmental sectors in each country organised a series of events to attract moviegoers to numerous physical and virtual arenas. These arrangements, however, were impacted by the spread of Covid-19 in 2020, prompting adjustments of events on the ground level and our differing research agendas in the three sections. In South Korea, the pandemic put a halt to the majority of in-person events scheduled throughout the year, which steered the section's investigation away from the centennial and brought a focus to Fellini's 90th anniversary in 2010. On the other hand, in Japan, a special week of celebrations dedicated to Fellini's centennial generated a substantial online database of visual and textual presentations of the events, and in China, the year 2020 marked the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Italy and the People's Republic of China, producing a wealth of news coverage and social media posts concerning the flow of transcultural exchanges.

Despite the differences in viewing experiences between the three countries owing to the vagaries of public health measures adopted, some commonalities stand out from our sections. First and foremost, the digital culture in all three films have extensively engaged with Fellini's centennial celebrations, thereby providing us with a solid understanding of contemporary cyberspace users' narratives of Fellini and Italian cinematic culture. Notwithstanding the three East Asian countries' differing political junctures shared with Italy, a summative examination of the audiences' narrated reception in the digital domain in this research paper generates a rather expansive and comparative understanding of Fellini's legacies. The results reveal the functional value of the screenings and reviews of Fellini's films as well as the cultural and political operations that each country's intergovernmental and commercial parties have partaken in order to maintain their cross-

cultural alignments. By retracing the digital engagements and the historical and present contexts between Italy and each country, this article offers a cross-disciplinary understanding of socio-cultural engagements of South Korea, Japan, and mainland China with Italy through Fellini and transnational cinematic culture. Digital media narratives about the filmmaker's wide-ranging themes and styles, together with the movie-going culture itself for art house films, also showcase the three countries' interests in Italian cinema as one key indication of these societies' continued engagement with Italy's highbrow cultural products. Furthermore, the relationships unveil the inner workings of domestic media in each country that attempt to re-utilise Fellini's prestige as a platform to organise and promote their own local events.

Furthermore, the narratives tend to focus on the viewers' emotional responses to Fellini's cinemas. Although the data from South Korea mainly tackles the audiences' perception of Fellini and his films outside the centennial celebrations, the segment conveys the Korean moviegoers' present-day appreciation of Fellini's films. Re-articulated by reviewers, critics, and filmmakers, this South Korean projection of Fellini's works encapsulates the audience's overall relationship with the director's films and other Italian films from the same period. The reactions from South Korea have resonated with those from Japan, as the emotive aspects from the Japanese reception recall the subjective introspections found in the Korean data. Finally, these media accounts point to the role that Fellini's centennial celebrations played in commemorating and furthering other economic, political, and cultural ties between Italy and each of the three countries. In the Japanese segment, an examination of the history of trade behind Italy and Japan has allowed readers to make a connection between the centennial and the two countries' economic and political relations. Such ties are also visible in the segment on China, as the research scrutinises the cultural and political glorifications of Italian products as reinforced by the local elites. The data from all three countries also reflect the audience's recent positionalities as they have surfaced through varying digital platforms within the last decade.

Through this research paper, we hope to re-affirm the value of critically investigating Italy's cinematic legacies as a way of examining transcultural relationships between Italy and Asia. We also showcase

how differing linguistic and cultural capacities, as well as co-authorship, can help advance this enterprise. Our analysis of Fellini's 2020 centennial screenings and the audience reception in South Korea, Japan, and mainland China provides an additional example of critically engaging with decolonial and transnational methods in Italian Studies.

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