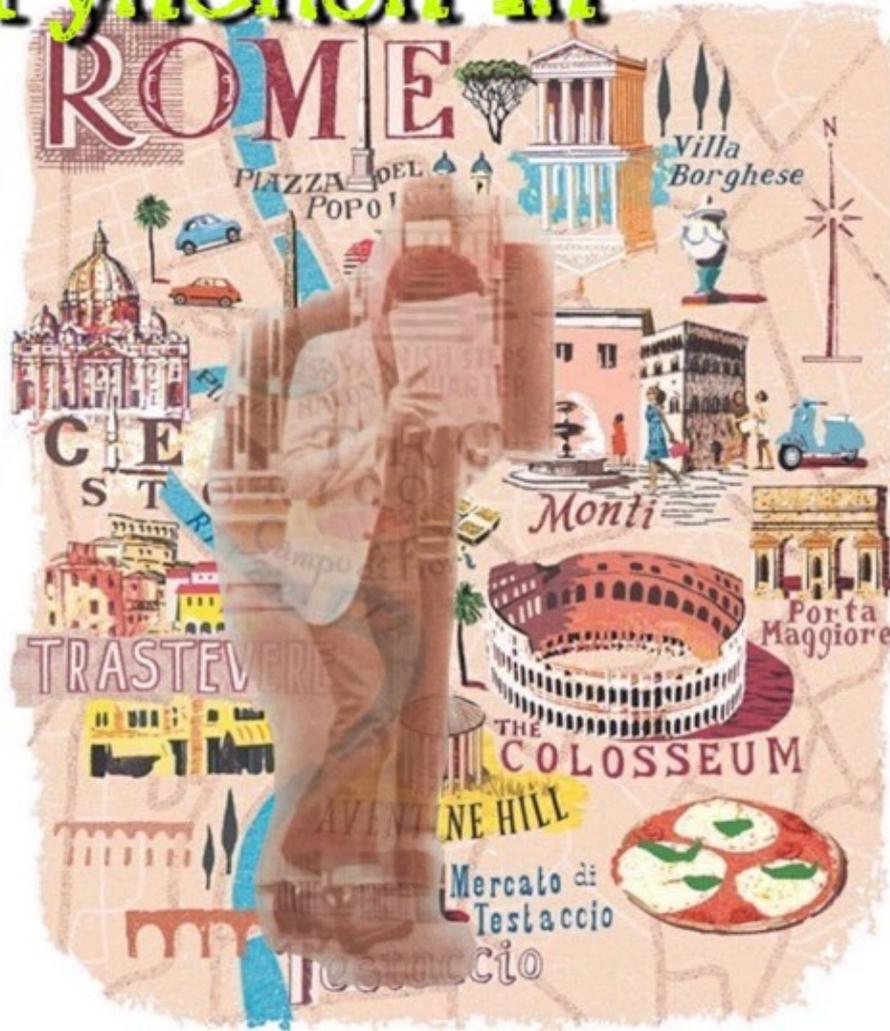


Pynchon in



International Pynchon Week 2019

Sapienza University of Rome

Dipartimento di Studi europei, americani e inter-culturali

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Official Website

<https://teacher835.wixsite.com/ipw2019>

Pynchon in Rome: it could sound like a provocation, since we cannot be sure whether Pynchon ever visited the capital of Italy, nor does the Eternal City qualify as a Pynchonian location the way other Italian cities, such as Florence or Venice, do. And yet a remarkably striking scene from one of Pynchon's earliest works, the short story "Under the Rose", takes place in Rome, where the spy Moldweorp attacks and almost kills a streetwalker, in a way reminiscent of a scene in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Moreover, Rome is often mentioned in the novels and stories, thus appearing *in absentia*, as an inescapable and vital cultural reference point: Rome as a symbol, more than a city.

Being the former capital city of the ancient Roman **Empire**, Rome is the best venue for presentations or panels dealing with empires and **imperialism** in Pynchon – from the British Empire and its Great Game in "Under the Rose" to the wars of the contemporary "American Empire" conjured up in *Bleeding Edge*.

Unfortunately, Rome was also the capital city of the short-lived Italian Empire, and the place where Benito Mussolini lived and ruled from 1922 to 1943. This is why the Roman IPW will welcome presentations and panels on **Fascism** and **Nazism** in Pynchon's oeuvre, and **totalitarianism** in general as depicted in his works (the term "totalitarian" having been coined in 1923 by Giovanni Amendola to define the peculiar features of the Fascist regime). Since the Italian Empire was founded after the ruthless and brutal Italian invasion of Ethiopia, **colonialism** and **racism** will also be key themes in this conference, providing fundamental coordinates for the interpretation of Pynchon's fiction.

Of course, Rome has been also the seat of the Vatican for almost twenty centuries, and the Pope is first and foremost the Bishop of Rome. A discussion of **religion** in Pynchon (as well as spiritualism, sects, and congregations) might thus be started during the next IPW, and one or more panels on this topic would be very welcome.

Being the capital city of the Italian Republic, Rome is also the best venue for a discussion of **Italy, Italicity** and all things Italian in Pynchon's novels and stories, from the Florentine episode in *V.* to the many Italian or Italian American characters, names, and allusions that abound in his works.

On the other hand, the Roman IPW will be a good opportunity to discuss **Pynchon in Italy**: his publishing history in Italy, the translations of his works in Italian, the impact his fiction has had and is having on Italian literature and culture at large.

Being 2,700 years old, Rome is one of the most ancient cities on Earth, with a long and stratified **history**. Pynchon's huge historical novels, *Gravity's Rainbow*, *Mason & Dixon* and *Against the Day*, plus a bewildering hybrid of semi-autobiographical novel and historical story such as *V.*, may well prompt discussions about history, historicity and historiography in Pynchon's works.

Rome is also the seat of RAI, the Italian state-owned radio and TV corporation. Not far from the city center there is Cinecittà, the so-called Hollywood-on-Tiber, where quite a few important Italian and American movies were made from 1945 to 1980. Rome itself appears very often in films, TV series, photographs, etc. Hence a discussion of the **media** in Pynchon, with a strong accent on cinema and TV, is something we look forward to.

Needless to say, Rome hosts an enormous artistic heritage, with masterpieces by a series of ancient (and modern) masters it would take days to list exhaustively. It is also the seat of some of the most important museums in the world, such as the Vatican Museums, the Musei Capitolini, Palazzo Barberini, the National Roman Museum. For this reason, it is the ideal venue for any presentation or panel dealing with **art, artists** and **museums** in Pynchon, including architecture, drama, music and dance. It is also the perfect place for reflections on **aesthetics** applied to Pynchon's fiction.

Rome is also the birthplace of Nobel-winning physicist Enrico Fermi, the father of the nuclear reactor and one of the protagonists of the Manhattan Project. Of course the analysis of the role played by **science & technology** in Pynchon's oeuvre is a mainstay of any IPW, and for this reason we encourage contributions tackling this interesting field.

Rome hosted the 1960 Olympic Games and other important sports events: a good reason to invite scholars to submit proposals concerning **sports and games** in Pynchon's oeuvre.

The small episode of "Under the Rose" in which Porpentine remembers seeing Moldweorp attacking a prostitute in Rome suggests another important topic, that is, **sexuality** in Pynchon's fiction – this being a theme traditionally connected to the image of the city, also thanks to the films shot here by Pier Paolo Pasolini and Federico Fellini.

Last, but absolutely **NOT** least, Rome is female in the Italian language; no wonder that it has as its iconic embodiment one of the greatest Italian actresses, Anna Magnani, a Roman native like nobody else, and the protagonist of Pier Paolo Pasolini's cinematic masterpiece *Mamma Roma*. All this asks for a discussion of **women** in Pynchon, and, more in general, for presentations and panels about **gender** issues in his fiction.

To submit presentations and/or panel proposals tackling these and other related topics for the 2019 International Pynchon Week in Rome (individual abstracts 250 words; panel proposals 500 words), please send an email to romeipw2019@gmail.com no later than August 31, 2018.