# A Sense of Place



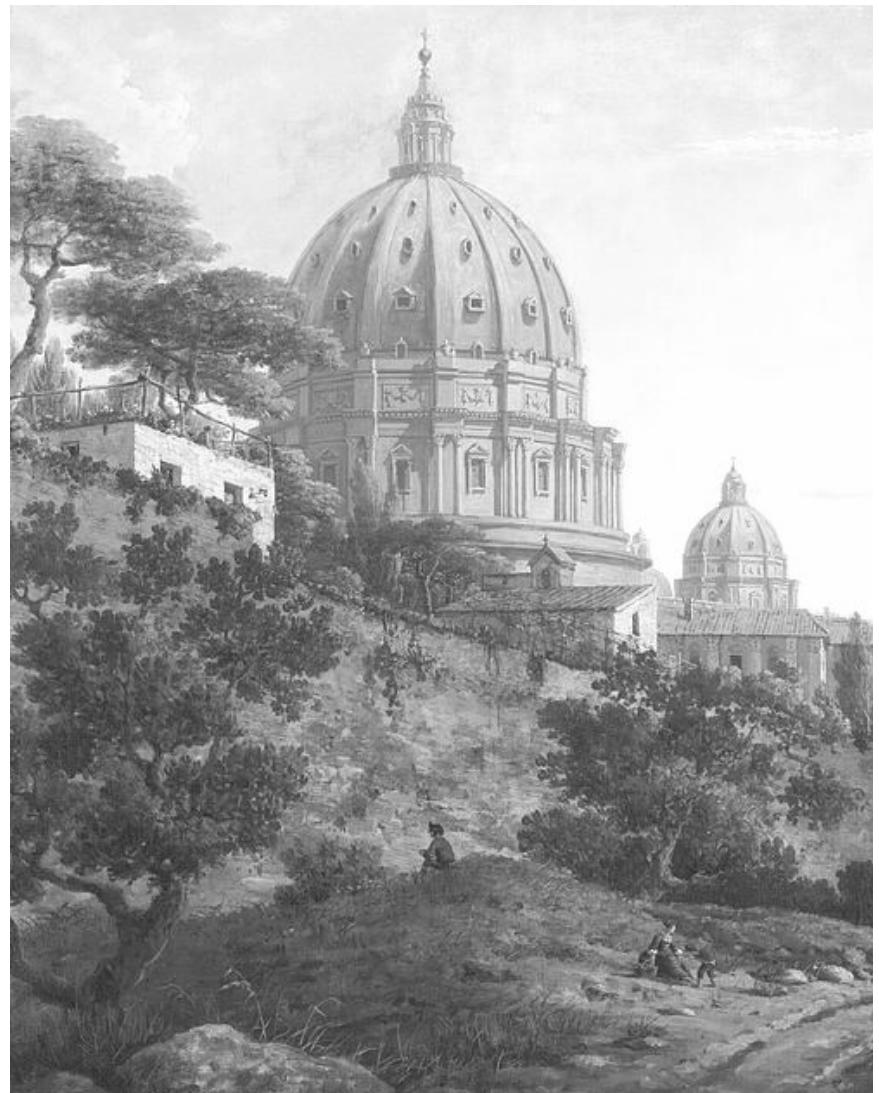# 5. Rome: Projection of Power

March 23, 2026

## D. Rome in Motion

Rome as depicted in other media: an orchestral showpiece, three movies, and an opera.

- ♫ **Respighi**: *Pines of Rome* (1924), fourth movement
- ♫ **AO Scott** on **Vittorio de Sica's** *Bicycle Thief* (1948)
- ♫ **Wyler**: *Roman Holiday* (1953), excerpts (Audrey Hepburn, Cary Grant)
- ♫ **Ackerman**: *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* (2003), first date (Helen Mirren, Olivier Martinez)
- ♫ **Puccini**: *Tosca* (1900), opening of Act III
- ♫ **Puccini**: *Tosca*, Act I, *Te Deum* (Ruggero Raimondi, *Scarpia*)

Gianlorenzo **Bernini** (1598–1680, *Italian sculptor and architect*), Francesco **Borromini** (1599–1677, *Italian architect*), Vittorio **de Sica** (1901–74, *Italian filmmaker*), Federico **Fellini** (1920–93, *Italian filmmaker*), Jean-Louis **Gérôme** (1824–1904, *French painter*), William **Marlow** (1740–1813, *English watercolorist*), **Michelangelo** (1475–1564, *Italian sculptor and architect*), Fra Andrea **Pozzo** (1642–1709, *Italian painter*), Giacomo **Puccini** (1858–1924, *Italian composer*), Ottorino **Respighi** (1879–1926, *Italian composer*), Nicola **Salvi** (1697–1751, *Italian architect),* John Warwick **Smith** (1749–1831, *English watercolorist*), Rudolf **Wiegmann** (1804–65, *German painter and archaeologist*), Tennessee **Williams** (1911–83, *American playwright*), William **Wyler** (1902–81, *American filmmaker*)

# 5. Rome: Projection of Power

Holiness, Hegemony, Hedonism: three utterly Roman qualities. Stylistically, the city is a palimpsest, the artifacts of one century written over the half-erased traces of its predecessors. It was the base for one of the most successful Empires in history. Overlapping with this, it established itself as a holy city, the seat of the Catholic Church, with congregants spread all over the world. All these have left an impact on the Rome we visit today.

But there is one quality that spans styles and periods, making little distinction between secular and sacred. Almost everything we see in Rome is a **Projection of Power**: power of the state, power of the church, power of the various families that have ruled the city and passed the papacy between them. It makes an unusual way to look at the city, but I hope a valid one. *rb.*

## A. First, Some Fellini

We watch the opening of Federico's classic film, *La dolce vita,* and discuss how it raises considerations for the rest of the class.

   ♫ **Film**: *La dolce vita,* opening (Federico Fellini, 1960)

   **Rome**: The Forum at night.

## B. Romanità?

Nobody goes to Rome as a pilgrimage to Mussolini—and yet he shaped the city more than we realize, in pursuit of its underlying Romanness, or *Romanità.*

   ♫ **Video**: Rome through the centuries (own compilation)

   **Rudolf Wiegmann**: *St. Peter's and Castel Sant'Anglelo* (1834, pc.)

   **Bernini**: *Piazza San Pietro* (1656–57)

   **Rome**: Monument to Vittore Emmanuele II (built 1885–1935)

   **Michelangelo**: *Campidoglio* (begun 1536)

   **Rome**: Basilica of Maxentius (312 CE)

   **Rome**: The Colosseum at night (69–96 CE)

   **Rome/EUR**: *Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana* (begun 1938)

   **Gérôme**: *Ave Caesar* (1859, Yale) and *Pollice Verso* (1872, Phoenix)

   ♫ **Respighi**: *Circenses* from *Feste Romane* (1929), with Gérôme: *The Christian Martyrs' Last Prayer* (1883, Walters)

## C. Rome as Theater

Beginning in the late Renaissance and continuing through the Baroque, Rome has been a kind of theater, using set pieces, color, light, and movement to present a particular view of itself to the world.

   **Pozzo**: *St. Ignatius Loyola Welcomed into Heaven* (c.1690)

   **Watercolors** by John Warwick Smith and William Marlow

   **Michelangelo**: St Peter's Dome (1647–90)

   **Bernini**: San Pietro: *Baldachino (1634)* and *Cathedra Petri (1666)*

   ♫ **Bernini***: Sant'Andrea al Quirinale (with Monteverdi *Vespers*)

   **Bernini**: *Four Rivers fountain* (1651)

   **Rome**: Piazza del Popolo (17th century)

   **Bernini**: *Fontana della Barcaccia* (1627), with the Spanish Steps

   **Salvi**: *Fontana du Trevi* (1732)

   ♫ **Film**: *La dolce vita,* Trevi Fountain scene (Anita Ekberg, Marcello Mastroianni)