



ASMI Annual Conference 2019

Italian Cultural Institute, London

29 – 30 November 2019

Call for papers

PROMISED LAND OF POPULISM? 'POPULIST' CULTURE AND POLITICS IN ITALY, 1800-2019

From 1994 until the present day, the President of the Italian Republic has sworn in five governments which can be labelled as 'populist'. The first government of the post-Tangentopoli era, led by Berlusconi, was both right wing *and* populist and the following decade the same leader of *Forza Italia* would head three more 'populist' coalitions between 2001 and 2013. The latest formation of the ideologically ambiguous Five Star Movement-Lega coalition government in 2018 appears to have cemented populism's image as the dominant presence in Italian politics over the past three decades. Such a development in Italian politics raises a number of questions regarding the relationship not only between populism and democracy but also between populism and Italian character or Italian culture. It also brings into sharp focus debates surrounding the durability of the populist phenomenon and the potential challenges posed to the institutions of both the Italian Republic and European Union.

Appeals made to the 'people' against the 'corrupt elites' of both Italian parliament and increasingly Brussels, have gained greater traction in public debate in Italy, throughout Europe as well as in USA. In order to understand this global phenomenon, we think it is necessary to look at it from a historical perspective and consider not only the social and political conditions but also the cultural and intellectual dynamics which have seen the rise of 'populism'; it is also important to reflect on whether there is a uniqueness to Italy's relationship – according to the Italian political scientist Marco Tarchi (2015) Italy is 'the promised land of populism' – with the phenomenon in the global context.

The conference will therefore explore the historic and cultural role of populism and in particular the discursive construction of 'the people' against a perceived group of 'elites' in political narratives from the Risorgimento until the present day.

To further our understanding of the study and debates surrounding populist politics, discourse and culture, the conference aims to place Italy's experience in a comparative and transnational context, in particular focusing on the role of populist discourse in affecting both national, regional and European identity.

We welcome proposals from scholars working in a variety of disciplines including history, politics, anthropology and ethnography, literature, cultural studies and media studies, sociology and political

theory, visual studies and discourse studies. Paper and panel proposals with transnational and comparative approaches are particularly encouraged. Panels might include, but are not limited to:

- ‘Anti-politics’ as a continuum in Italian history
- Representations of “Italian populism”: films, literature, media,
- Populist rhetoric from the Risorgimento to Tangentopoli
- Links between fascism and populism, and regionalism and populism
- Representation of the ‘people’ and the populist leader; representation of the people and power in art
- The role of the ‘people’ in Italian public and cultural discourses
- The rise of populism of the Left and the Right. Cultural and political trajectories, historical roots and discourse
- Populism, identity and migration in Italy and Europe
- The crisis of social democracy in Italy and Europe and its link with populism
- Populism, the new media and fake news
- The rise of the radical right in Italy and in Europe and its links with populism

All proposals for papers or panels (300 word abstract per 20 minutes presentation, plus a brief biography) should be sent to populism2019@gmail.com by 30 June 2019.

Acceptances will be communicated by 31 July. Accepted speakers will be required to join ASMI and register for the conference by 1 November. Registration details will be announced no later than September.

Keynote Speakers: Federico Finchelstein (New School for Social Research) and Nadia Urbinati (Columbia University)

Organising Committee:

Gianluca Fantoni (Nottingham Trent), Carl Levy (Goldsmiths), Marzia Maccaferri (Goldsmiths), Andrea Mammone (Royal Holloway), Marta Musso (King’s College London), George Newth (University of Bath), Franco Zappettini (University of Liverpool).