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ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF MODERN ITALY
ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2011

http://www.asmi.org.uk/

CALL FOR PAPERS

THE ITALIAN 'CHARACTER': VIRTUES AND VICES

Venue: IGRS, Senate House, Malet Street, London
Date: 15–16 December 2011
Keynote speaker: Silvana Patriarca

The debate on national identity is often associated with qualifying the defining traits of a nation's 'character'. The question of defining the Italian 'character' came sharply to the fore in the aftermath of Italy's unification, when the challenges of 'making Italians' raised questions about their national characteristics. Francesco De Sanctis saw in Machiavelli the 'precursor of the values of a nineteenth century liberal patriot, opening the way to individual autonomy, fatherland, nationality, liberty, equality, virility, work and seriousness'; in Guicciardini, however, De Sanctis also saw the signs of 'a more feeble and corrupt generation, who, while sharing Machiavelli's aspirations, lacked will and was unable to pursue them' (S. Patriarca, *Italian Vices*). The 2011 ASMI Conference will explore representations and discursive constructions of the Italian 'character' in the light of the virtues and vices which have historically been attributed to or divined within it. We welcome inter- and cross-disciplinary contributions aimed at reflecting on how the Machiavellian model of republican virtue of citizens and 'the man of Guicciardini' shaped the way Italians imagined themselves from the Jacobin republics to the republic of parties. How has the idea of virtue – and its opposite, vice – shaped the construction and reading of the Italian character in modern and contemporary Italy? How has this been represented in literary writings, films and the press at home and abroad? How has the presence of the Church informed these representations in negative and positive ways? From the patriots of the Risorgimento to the tests of Fascism and war in the twentieth century, what virtues have the Italians called upon and what vices have they cultivated? How have traditional understandings and embodiments of these vices and virtues been challenged, displaced, broadened and redefined by developments in discourses and practices of citizenship, political 'impegno', and feminist and sexual politics? How have notions of the 'Italian character' been rendered inherently unstable, fissured, complicated and enriched by perceived regional differences, or by internal migration and immigration? To what extent, in what contexts and to what end do traditional (problematic? nostalgic? idealistic?) stereotypes of the Italian 'character' still hold purchase today?

Themes for contributions may include:

- **Representing the Italian 'character' in literature, cinema, the press**
- **Italians seen from within and from without**
- **Italians abroad: affirming and blurring the Italian 'character'**
- **Italians and patriotism. National pride and national shame**

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- **The Italian 'character' and questions of gender/sexuality**
- **(Im)migration and notions of 'Italianità'**
- **The educated middle classes and republican virtue from the Risorgimento to the era of Berlusconi**

Papers can be in Italian or English and should be no more than 20 minutes in length. Proposals of 250 words maximum, together with a brief biography, should reach the conference organisers by **1 September 2011.**

Conference organisers: Carl Levy (c.levy@gold.ac.uk); Charlotte Ross (c.e.ross@bham.ac.uk); Marcella Sutcliffe (Marcella.sutcliffe@ncl.ac.uk).

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