

EDITORIAL

Modern Italy turns 30!

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In the first *Modern Italy* editorial in 1995, John Pollard noted that Christopher Seton-Watson's hope, expressed when the Association for the Study of Modern Italy was founded in 1982, had been fulfilled: the Association had its own journal. The timing could not have been better – Pollard claimed – as historians had recognised Italy's continuing relevance to the history of the Mediterranean as a whole, its role as a major source of emigration to the 'new world', and its position as a small but notable colonial power (Pollard 1995, 1).

Modern Italy has its origins in the modest ASMI newsletter. Simon Parker, now Professor of Politics at York, played a pivotal role in transforming the newsletter into a fully fledged journal. In its early days, *Modern Italy* operated without an external publisher, relying on ASMI and Anglia Polytechnic University for its production. It was later taken up by Taylor & Francis (1998), and more recently by Cambridge University Press (2016), reflecting its growing prominence and scholarly reputation. The journal's first issue, published in 1995, originated from the ASMI conference on Berlusconi's first rise to power in 1994. This inaugural issue featured an opening article by the esteemed historian Paul Ginsborg. Notably, John Foot had the honour of organising that conference that contributed so much to the creation of the journal. This milestone feels particularly significant now, as he assumes the role of chair of ASMI; a circle seems to have closed on this thirtieth anniversary. For those interested in *Modern Italy*'s detailed history, we recommend the excellent editorial written for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the journal by the then editors, Penelope Morris and Mark Seymour (Morris and Seymour 2020).

From the outset, the journal became a hub for dialogue among leading experts in Italian Studies, offering a space for original research on Italian history, culture and politics from the eighteenth century to the present. At the same time, *Modern Italy* has played a crucial role in supporting early-career researchers, enabling many to publish the results of their work, often for the first time. Since its inception, the journal has been distinguished by the international breadth of its submissions. All its editors have played a significant role in shaping its distinctive and well-defined identity, and they all have contributed to enhancing *Modern Italy*'s reputation for academic excellence. Because of that, the journal has received numerous accolades over the years. In 2023, under the leadership of the current editors, Gianluca Fantoni and Milena Sabato, *Modern Italy* was granted 'Classe A' status by the Italian National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes (ANVUR).

If *Modern Italy* boasts a glorious past, the present might appear, at first glance, promising. Numerous research articles are submitted to our system every month; we publish many Contexts and Debates pieces, which have become important spaces for discussion and the exchange of ideas among leading scholars; we produce an extraordinary number of book reviews; and we regularly publish review articles. In 2024, the journal underwent a major transformation by transitioning to an Open Access format. In collaboration with Cambridge University Press and ASMI, the staff of *Modern Italy* remains committed to maintaining the journal's excellence while ensuring fair access to publishing opportunities. Researchers from all backgrounds, regions and institutions are given an equal chance to see their articles published, and their work now benefits from increased visibility and the potential for broader recognition and citation by their peers.

Yet, there are reasons for concern. In the editorial mentioned above, Pollard described Italian Studies as a field expanding 'as never before' in the British Isles and the English-speaking world. Thirty years later, alas, this is no longer the case. As we know, many Modern Languages departments have been closed, and among the modern languages, Italian has been particularly affected by the cuts decided by university managers in the UK and other English-speaking countries. Certainly, Italian Studies has found shelter in other schools and departments: Italian cinema, politics and history continue to be taught, and many students remain engaged with these subjects. However, without the teaching of the Italian language, is there a future for Italian Studies? And this is not the only issue. The entire field of the humanities, within which Italian Studies is situated, is under threat. There are reasons to believe that what we have seen recently in the schools of humanities – staff cuts, reductions in course offerings and shrinking research funding – is only the beginning.

What can we do? At *Modern Italy*, we believe the only way forward is to persevere. We must tirelessly and relentlessly reaffirm the importance of Italian Studies and continue to explore the history, politics and culture of a country that is extraordinary in all these aspects.

On 13 June 2025, at the Italian Cultural Institute in London, distinguished speakers – including Philip Cooke, Paul Corner, John Dickie, Ilaria Favretto, John Foot, Stephen Gundle, Penelope Morris, Lucy Riall and Perry Willson – will offer reflections and engage in conversation on the current state of Italian Studies and its future. However, we want this event to be, above all, a joyful occasion – a fitting celebration of 30 years of the journal's history. Our hope is that another 30 (at least) will follow!

We want to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has contributed to the success of *Modern Italy* over the past 30 years – in whatever way they have been involved. This includes former general editors; the Editorial Board, the Editorial Committee and ASMI members; and the authors, reviewers, translators, publishers, subscribers and readers.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to our associate editors – Nick Carter, Vinzia Fiorino, Rossella Merlino and Nicolas Virtue – and to our book review editors – Dalia Abdullah, Teresa Agovino, Amy King, Alberto Murru and Giorgia Priorelli – for their outstanding and tireless contributions. We are also deeply grateful to our administrative assistant, Anna Lanfranchi, for ensuring everything runs so smoothly.

A special acknowledgement is extended to the team at Cambridge University Press, particularly Hannah Patrick and Mary Mochrie, the journal's current commissioning editor and content manager, as well as Jamie McIntyre and Hilary Horrocks. Their dedication has been instrumental in shaping the journal's success in recent years.

As current editors, we also want to express our appreciation to all those who have devoted their time and effort to reviewing submissions. One of the most rewarding aspects of our role is being able to offer authors detailed and constructive feedback.

Additionally, we extend our gratitude to the growing pool of translators who make the journal's content accessible to an international audience.

We are delighted to welcome John Foot as the new chair of ASMI. We are confident that he will support the journal just as his predecessor, Philip Cooke, did. Indeed, we owe Professor Cooke a debt of gratitude for his significant contributions to both the Association and the journal during his tenure.

It is with great pleasure that we present the first issue of *Modern Italy's* thirtieth volume. This issue features five research articles that showcase the diversity of scholarship for which the journal is renowned, authored by Margaret Renata Neil and Federica M. Cerruti, Goffredo Adinolfi, Sebastian De Pretto, Anna Carola Freschi and Vittorio Mete, and Martina Gabrielli. The issue also includes two interconnected Contexts and Debates articles – one by Gian Luca Fruci and Carmine Pinto, and the other by Lucie Bargel, Carlo Caprioglio, Enrico Gargiulo and Daniela Trucco – along with an extensive and varied book review section.

Buona lettura! And Happy Birthday to *Modern Italy!*

References

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