During recent years, the serene (and perhaps somewhat stagnant) waters of Risorgimento historiography have been upset by a new trend of studies that began with the so-called linguistic turn. This new historiographical tendency started to observe the history of the Risorgimento through a «culturalistic» approach, thus shifting its attention towards literary, theatrical, pictorial, and more generally artistic sources, attempting to understand how the ideals of the homeland and of the nation were formed within the cultural horizon and collective imagination of the time. Therefore, it questioned the role these ideals played in the gestation of a class of patriots, both male and female, who decided to dedicate their lives to the construction of a free and independent nation. Around the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century, these geopolitical concepts of nation and of the homeland started being used in a completely different way than in earlier centuries, taking on previously unknown semantic values. In particular, the term nation, following the French Revolution, took on a precise and unprecedented political meaning: to identify the community as the fundamental depositary of sovereignty and as the subject from which the legitimacy of institutions called to discipline collective life within a specific territory derived.

1. New Approaches to the History of the Risorgimento: the Question of «Martyrs»

This renewal has been led by Alberto Mario Banti, who in many works has proposed an original reading of the birth of the idea of nation during the Risorgimento. Banti has focused his attention on those national-patriotic intellectuals who, as promoters of new political communication modalities capable of stirring up emotions and...
speaking to the heart of the people (what George L. Mosse called «political aesthetics»), are to be considered the true architects of the national discourse. By examining novels, poems, theatrical dramas, paintings, statues, and melodramas produced by artists and intellectuals between the end of the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century, he has identified a series of recurring mythical-symbolical elements. The first is a description of the nation as a community based on kinship and descent, within which the essential element consisted of blood ties between individuals and generations. The feeling of belonging to a nation took shape because people felt they were children of the same «homeland», members of a family they were bound to by ties of blood, land and destiny which were passed on from one generation to the next.

In order to bring the homeland dignity and strength, it needed to be the expression of the will of the national community, and thus it could no longer be subjected to foreign dominions that limited its freedom. Therefore, a great degree of attention was placed on suffering and sacrifice to the point of «martyrdom», to testify the sacred value of the nation as well as stir up a patriotic movement that would promote the struggle for its independence. As Banti defines it, the recall to the necessity of sacrifice is an operation which allows for the national discourse to be presented as a para-religious political discourse: militants who die for the cause immediately become «martyrs», that is, subjects who «demonstrate» their political «faith» with death. Thus, national wars transform into «holy wars» or «crusades», propagandistic action becomes «apostleship», and the rebirth of the nation becomes «resurrection» (the original etymological sense of the term «Risorgimento»).

Apart from this sacralisation of idea of the nation, which takes place through a mimesis of Christian tradition, a further distinctive feature of the Risorgimento's patriotic discourse can be identified in the love/honour/virtue triad. If the nation is a community based on descent, it is necessary that this genealogical line express a coherent set of values, one that is very different from the ones that were successful during the centuries of «decadence» and of moral and political decline of the Italian people. Male figures must retrieve their bellicose virility, the capacity to fight for the homeland to the extent of sacrificing their own lives; women must identify with the sexually and morally virtuous models of mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters who share their men’s predicaments and subordinate romantic love to patriotic devotion.

Not every part of this new reading of the Risorgimento phenomenon is fully convincing. In some cases, the almost exclusive utilisation of artistic-literary sources leads to univocal and distorted interpretations of elements that appear to be the

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3 Banti, Sublime madre nostra, 28–29.
result of a concatenation of numerous other social, political and economic factors. However, this is not the place to discuss in depth works by Banti and other scholars belonging to the nouvelle vague of cultural history. These figures share the undisputed merit of having revitalised the asphyxial world of studies regarding the Italian nineteenth century by introducing contributions from innovative historiographical trends and genres which, having swept through studies coming from other countries during those very same years, have allowed for fertile comparative analyses between different national contexts.4

A particularly stimulating element introduced by such studies are suggestions inviting us to read the cult of martyrs as one of the motivational factors behind patriotic volunteering and as one of the proselytism tools used by the Risorgimento movement, starting with Mazzini. After all, the founder of the Giovine Italia should be considered, within the scenario created by the failure of the 1830/31 rebellions, the initiator of the political-symbolic structure that, connected to a teleological vision of martyrdom, would penetrate the discursive context of moderate liberalism after 1848. This is not to say that during earlier periods, in particular the Napoleonic one, a certain secular cult of the deceased at war had been lacking. It was nourished as it was by those Italian soldiers who fought in the Grande Armée, and for a long time this cultivated the «myth of the hero», an amalgam of romantic elements and references to ancient models which certainly was proto-patriotic by nature and left a significant trace in the discursive context of the age of Restoration.5

The cult of heroes fallen while fighting for freedom had begun with the French Revolution, which had attempted to use it both to represent and legitimise itself.6 Through the appropriation and secularisation of Catholic ritual models, combined with revolutionary elements and symbols of classic antiquity, the Jacobin élites initiated that process of sacralisation of politics that was to become one of the distinctive traits of modernity.7 The element of discontinuity introduced by Mazzini, if compared to the cult of the fallen during the Napoleonic era, lies in the individualisation of the concept of «useful death», that is, a death functional to the pursuit of a patriotic goal which had remained substantially unknown to Italian soldiers when fighting for the Armée. Indeed, it was Mazzini who established the terminus a quo of national martyrology in 1821, and who, before anyone else, was capable of transforming a concatenation of defeats, those that took place in 1820/21 and 1830/31,

into episodes of heroism that testified to the worthiness of the cause people were prepared to die for. Mazzini conceived the cult of martyrs of freedom as an integral part of his political communication strategy and as a tool «to confer an idea of sacredness upon his own idea of Italy». However, we must also note that he elaborated such an instrumental reading of patriotic martyrdom «not as the preparation for an educative project in the classical sense of the term, but as a support for the physical and cultural continuity of his group of militants». In other words, he envisioned this cult as both a propaganda tool and as the identity-building cement for a political formation that was perennially unstable, menaced and forced to question the sense of its own challenge and the risks it meant faced. In this sense, Roberto Balzani notes that

the public use of the «brave» in prospect of a sacralization of politics, based on the model of what had been concretely realized in other European contexts, would be perfected only after unity had been obtained; it would be an analytical mistake, in other terms, not to consider the peculiar and operative nature of the memory machine created by the democratic leader in the midst of the crossfire of the Risorgimento.

In truth, as we will see further on, the use of «martyrs for freedom» within the sphere of a conscious process of sacralisation of the idea of the homeland began as soon as 1848, and thus a long time before national unification. However, it was undoubtedly Mazzini who created the conditions for that cult to blossom and to escape its semi-clandestine or private forms in order to obtain a fully public value. The decisive turning point should be identified in his reading of the martyrdom of the Bandiera brothers and in the success obtained, both in Italy and abroad, by his commemorative writings regarding the tragic 1844 expedition. In the first of these, published in Paris in 1845, we read:

Those who sacrificed themselves in Cosenza have taught us all that Man must live and die for his beliefs: they have shown the world that Italians know how to die: they have validated across Europe the opinion that there will be one Italy. The Faith leading such men to seek out death just like young men seek out the embrace of their fiancée, is not the frenzy of guilty agitators or the dream of a few deluded

10 Ibid.
people; it is a blooming religion, a decree of Providence. To the flame of the homeland that comes from those tombs, sooner or later, the Angel of Italy will light the torch which, for the third time, will be illuminated from Rome [...] but the Rome of the People, the roads of Progress and of Humanity.\footnote{11}

That volume, which began with a dedication to Jacopo Ruffini, «who died as a martyr for Italian faith in 1833», was read by many people and stirred up much emotion and grief in the public. In recent times, a few scholars have attempted, not very convincingly, to read the text as proof of Mazzini’s faith in reincarnation-based theories. To the extent that in Ricordi dei fratelli Bandiera, reincarnationism is envisioned as the «authentic central axis of the argumentative strategy» of Mazzini («angelology», «reminiscence», «progressive reincarnation with a recovery of conscience and memory») and as the basis for «hints towards a sacralisation of politics [...] and the polemic against all visions of life based on «happiness»».\footnote{12}

Mazzini, just a few months after the publication of that first text, conceived an actual series of articles dedicated to the Martyrs for Italian Liberty, which appeared in the «People’s Journal» between March and June 1846.\footnote{13} According to Lucy Riall, Mazzini also introduced the new category of «living martyrs», which he was convinced he belonged to: patriots dedicated to an existence of sacrifices, exiled or imprisoned, denied any possibility of building a normal family.\footnote{14} During various periods of his life, Garibaldi also assumed the status of living martyr and, especially following the events of Aspromonte, this figure as a wounded soldier was often compared to that of Christ, to the extent that the custom of collecting his relics became widespread.\footnote{15} Similarly, on the Catholic front, ever since 1860 at the latest, Pope Pius IX was represented as a «martyr Pope», the object of a persecution campaign by the modern world and, from 1870 onwards, when Rome became the capital of the Kingdom of Italy, forced to live «imprisoned» in the Vatican and to suffer «a new Calvary».

According to the English scholar, the construction of the Italian patriotic martyrology following the Unity of the country was in many ways a specular operation to the beatification and sanctification programme regarding Christian martyrs, developed in those same years by Pius IX. Furthermore, Riall identifies many analogies

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{13} See «The Martyrs for Italian Liberty. Attilio and Emilio Bandiera», in: \textit{People’s Journal} (March 31 1846); «Jacopo Ruffini», in: \textit{People’s Journal} (June 30 1846).
\end{thebibliography}
in the opposing cults of those fallen in the war for Rome during the 1860s: on one side the Garibaldine volunteers who died on the Aspromonte and at Mentana or the bersaglieri fallen at Porta Pia; on the other, the Papal Zouaves, an international force that had flocked to aid the State of the Church, who died fighting against the Piedmontese army in 1860 and in 1870 and against Garibaldi in 1862 and in 1867. The modalities for the construction of the opposing martyrologies were analogous, with funerary rites, public commemorations and the erection of monuments.

Lucy Riall comes to the conclusion that «Italian nationalism was neither a secular doctrine nor a new religion which attempted to substitute the Christian God with the divinity of the nation. It was instead the expression of a romantic culture that acted in an essentially Catholic symbolic environment». And even after 1848/49, when the neo-Guelph dream of an involvement of the Catholic Church in the struggle for national independence fell through irremediably, it was still «impossible to separate Italian nationalism from its original religious collocation».16

As I will further underline in the pages that follow, I find this interpretation debatable, as it appears to underestimate the strongly anti-clerical imprint of a large part of the Risorgimento movement, both in its democratic fringes and in the liberal and moderate ones. With the partial exception of Mazzini, whose profound religiosity did not however stop him from pursuing laic and anti-temporal politics,17 all others who participated in the construction of the cult of martyrs of the homeland were firmly set in anti-clerical positions. The most striking cases were those of the former priest Atto Vannucci, who had become a neo-Ghibelline and a proud opposer of papal power,18 and of Giuseppe Ricciardi, the animator of the 1869 Anticouncil of Naples. Therefore, their efforts should be considered an attempt to build a civic religion, which consciously drew elements from traditional Christian religion, in order to utilise its symbols and liturgies, but which was at the same time firmly anchored to a laic and secularised terrain. On the other hand, et pour cause, up until the first world war, the Catholic Church would not participate in a relevant way in the construction of the cult of the dead for the homeland in Italy, to the extent that, as some scholars have pointed out, «we may identify precisely in the lack of a theoretical elaboration by the Church the element which facilitated the sacralisation of the nation and the afflux of merely civic-religious models».19
2. Atto Vannucci’s «Martyrs» and the Sacralisation of the Idea of Nation

In view of these recent suggestions, a text such as The Martyrs of Italian Freedom by Atto Vannucci lends itself to new and more rigorous reflections, as it would appear to be a far more important work than has so far been recognised by political and cultural historiography. We can even state that it takes on a paradigmatic value for the modalities through which the Risorgimento discourse was formed and almost summarises the emotions and the new symbolic-ritual universe (what Banti would define as the «profound figures») which gave birth to the patriotic movement.

The first edition of the book was published in Florence in 1848, but Vannucci had been cultivating a similar idea since as early as 1836, if we consider that during that year he confided to his friend Enrico Bindi that he was «preparing an Italo Polish Martyrology». After all, it was Mazzini himself who, in a writing dated 1846, defined the Polish people as «the Martyr-population». In the volume, Vannucci collected a series of profiles and medallions he had published in 1847 in the Florentine democratic newspaper L’Alba, which he also directed, and in 1848 in the appendixes of the Guerrazzian paper L’Inflessibile. The first edition, printed by the Società editrice fiorentina (significantly, the same publishing house which printed L’Inflessibile), bears a different title from the later editions, and the content also differs notably. I believe it is important to underline these differences, not in order to display philological scrupulosity, but rather because all historians who analysed Vannucci’s work dated his choice to include in the Italian martyrology victims from the Jacobin and Napoleonic periods to 1848, while he actually made this choice in 1849, after the failure of the independence war and of the democratic-republican government experiences. Indeed while the second edition was published in Leghorn in 1849, with the title it would then maintain, The martyrs of Italian freedom from 1794 to 1848. Memories collected by Atto Vannucci, and featured no less than 327 pages, the 1848 Florentine edition only featured 179 pages and was entitled The Martyrs of Italian Freedom in the Nineteenth Century. The latter began with a tribute to the 1821 patriots persecuted by the Austrians, starting with Federico Confalonieri, to whom the first chapter was dedicated, and, through the figures of Pellico, Maroncelli, Santorri di Santarosa, Ciro Menotti, the Bandiera brothers, Iacopo Ruffini, and many others, making its way up to the 1848 «martyrs of the Lombard revolution».

Only starting with the 1849 Livornese edition did the work include within the nation’s martyrology the martyrs of the Neapolitan Republic, as well as an initial celebration of the three men condemned to the gallows by the Bourbon government five years later.

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21 «While in other nations martyrs were counted per individuals, in Poland they were counted per entire masses. It has been, over the course of the last fifteen years, the Martyr-population» (Poland, «People’s Journal», April 21, 1846).
22 The publishing house was Poligrafia Italiana.
23 The subtitle was already Memories collected by Atto Vannucci.
in 1894: Emanuele De Deo, Vincenzo Vitaliano and Vincenzo Galiani. This celebration was followed by pages dedicated, among others, to Francesco Caracciolo, to Eleonora Fonseca Pimentel, to Luisa Sanfelice, to the martyrs of the Cisalpine Republic, and to those belonging to the «Carbonari», finishing with the «Italian exiles in Spain and elsewhere».

It is interesting to observe that it was Vannucci who codified the «dual declination of the «fallen»», which would later characterise the entire sphere of Risorgimento-related memorial writings, up until the conclusion of the wars for independence: on the one hand

the properly military one, usually emphasised by the asymmetry of the forces at war (volunteer/Sardinian militia/troops versus imperial armies); on the other hand, the civic one, destined in turn to split into the traumatic yet not fatal outcome of incarceration and exile or the catastrophe of the gallows and of tragic and desperate death: due to a disease contracted in prison or, in the case of the supreme classical gesture, due to one’s own choice.  

A significant element was the inclusion within the dimension of «martyrdom», of the «exiled», which furthermore, starting from 1849, represented for Vannucci an existential and autobiographical reflection. Precisely in the Martiri, and in similar works that appeared in successive years, we can identify the start of that «representation of the Risorgimento as an uninterrupted series of exiles» which played such an important part in the European public opinion’s perception of the Italian problem. It was not by chance that the dedication to Pietro Giannone, the Modenese historian and patriot condemned to exile following the 1821 uprisings and who Vannucci had met in Paris in 1843, remained unaltered in all the book’s various editions. The author of a romantic poem published in 1829, The Exile, which had soon become a cult book in Italian patriotic and democratic environments, Giannone was celebrated by the Tuscan writer as an «enormously strong martyr of the democratic idea» and as an example of «poetry that teaches strong and free affections».

The first edition (1848) also featured an anonymous preface that clarified what the goal of the volume was to be. It set itself «not only to pay a deserved tribute to men who died for a cause more noble than any other, but to animate through their

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example the youth that feels prepared for magnanimous enterprises, and in which the hope of our miserable homeland lives on and towers alone». The text then proceeded as follows:

if there is something a people can be proud of, that is the great figures it produced. But who is greater than those who chose to live in misfortune and abandoned life to serve their homeland? Nor certainly is there any nation that can claim to have given more victims, or more valiant ones to the cause of truth than Italy [...]. The land that produced so many men devoted to the religion of the homeland cannot be abandoned by God, and must hope with the uttermost foundation to see its future fate improved despite the uncertainties, the difficulties and the ugly facts of the present.27

Thus, in the preface of the first edition of the Martyrs, that was perhaps not penned by Vannucci, we find a locution that allows us to understand how the process of sacralisation of the nation was already underway at that time and how the contemporaries already felt the need to build a civic religion as an invigorating element for patriotic forces. This, as we know, would be the mission undertaken by the Italian ruling class following the unification of the country, especially after the Left’s rise to power, in light of the difficulties presented by the aggregation of the national community around a series of shared symbols and values. In June 1882, just a few days after Garibaldi’s death, Francesco Crispi would speak explicitly of the need to solemnise the «religion of the homeland» by creating locations dedicated to the secular national cult and consecrated to the memory of the nation’s «grands hommes». 28 A few months later Giosue Carducci would define Guglielmo Oberdan, the Trieste-born irredentist who had been condemned to death by the Austrians and hanged on 20 December 1882, as a «martyr of the religion of the homeland». 29 Carducci himself would also contribute to perpetuate the fortune of the Martyrs in liberal Italy by re-publishing two of its chapters, those regarding Giuseppe Andreoli and Ciro Menotti, in his Readings of the Italian Risorgimento, the successful anthological collection first published by Zanichelli in 1896/97, and later republished many times. 30

However, the goals Atto Vannucci had set out to accomplish were made explicit above all in the introduction to the 1849 edition, partially already present in the 1848 edition as incipit of the chapter on Federico Confalonieri. This text reveals how he envisioned a direct bond between martyrs of the homeland and Christian martyrs,

27 Ibid., vii–viii (emphasis mine).
and how lucidly he was aware of the need to build, through the cult of dead heroes, a «religion of the homeland», a set of public rituals aimed at fortifying the sense of belonging to the nation.

In the patriotic martyrology of Vannucci, as in those published in later years, the chosen models were the lives of Christian saints and martyrs, but at the same time the volume featured frequent references to the neo-Plutarchian cult of lives of illustrious men. After all, his entire political argument was constructed around the exaltation of the ancient and the depreciation of the modern, identified as a period of decadence. The martyrs of the homeland were modern heroes who closely followed the models of heroism of classical ancient times and early Christianity. The result, as has been observed, was the matching of «often distant individual trajectories in a sort of national map of sacrifice, with the effect of representing a strongly unitary history, and therefore a strongly unitary collective identity». 31 Despite the author’s non-historicist perspective, and despite his faith in the supremacy of «good writing» rather than the philology which was already characterising certain historical studies of the time, Vannucci’s Martyrs should be considered as one of the first attempts to offer a unitary reading of the Risorgimento, by identifying its roots in the revolutionary and Napoleonic age.

As early as the first edition, in 1848, the author appeared to avoid limiting his work to a simple commemoration of martyrs, and preferred instead to turn such an operation into the first step of a far more ambitious project: the construction of a civic religion capable of nurturing love for the homeland through the cult of fallen heroes and the memory of their sacrifice. Thus began what has been defined as «a secularisation of the Christian concept of eternal life»: a concept which started to be «shaped around the nation, which became the highest reference point for an intra-mundane transcendence». 32 This operation also included the recovery of ancient representations of the medieval «pro patria mori», according to which soldiers who died while defending their king were guaranteed a place in heaven and eternal life, just like Christian martyrs. 33

Vannucci noted with pleasure that «during its initial resurgence, Italy had begun honouring its martyrs: it had celebrated, with religious and civic celebrations, those who died for the homeland on the tyrants’ gallows and on the battlefield». Now, he added, «their cult must become popular, their names are to be written in the hearts of the masses, and the story of these heroes must become part of the education of the young: of this too we can already boast a few noble examples». 34

32 Janz / Klinkhammer, La morte per la patria in Italia, xi.
34 Martiri della libertà italiana nel secolo decimonono, 2.
Vannucci was probably alluding to the public rituals that had taken place in various parts of the country following the outburst of the war for independence and the deaths of the first combatants, especially of the volunteers who fought in Lombardy. The author himself had witnessed and participated in one of these rites in Modena (during the first days of April 1848) to honour the memory of Ciro Menotti, whose remains, «thrown in a place destined to vile men», had been transferred in those very days «to the ground sacred to Christians». The Tuscan intellectual, who was present during the ceremony and delivered one of the orations, would later re-evoke that day of 1848 in the successive editions of the Martyrs, which he constantly corrected and updated up until his death.

Circa twenty years later, at the beginning of June 1867, was celebrated the ceremony for the transportation, from Cosenza to Venice, of the ashes of Attilio and Emilio Bandiera, the two symbols par excellence of Risorgimento martyrology. Those of the two Veneto-born brothers killed in 1844 were just two of the many bodies of fallen heroes or patriots condemned to exile, and thus deceased far from their native land, which were being exhumed and taken back to their places of birth. These rites represented an essential element for the pedagogy of memory that was central in the attempt to build a shared sentiment of national identity. Other noteworthy examples can be found in the grand celebrations which took place in Venice in March 1868 for the transportation of the mortal remains of Daniele Manin, or those which took place in 1886 for the recovery of the mortal spoils of Piero Maroncelli, which, 40 years after being buried in New York, were placed in the Pantheon of the monumental cemetery of Forlì, inaugurated on that specific occasion.

In March 1870 Atto Vannucci, who had by then been identified as one of the priests of the cult of Risorgimento martyrs, was asked to join the committee pro-
moting the transportation from England of the ashes of Ugo Foscolo and their inhumation in the church of Santa Croce on 24 June 1871. A ceremony that appeared to compensate Florence for the failed transfer of the bones of Dante, invoked to no end during the sixth centenary of his birth in 1865, and through which Santa Croce, «by welcoming among its great men the greatest of the poets, the poet-soldier, received from the new Italy the official chrism of an indisputable cultural-patriotic «sacralisation»».41

In 1848, as observed by Maurizio Ridolfi, the calendar of celebrations recorded a tendential uniforming between the various states of the peninsula. The same may be stated about the ceremonial languages, centered on community unanimism, brotherly love, and feelings of compassion and religion of sacrifice. After the spring of 1848, however, the democrats conquered the hegemony of public spaces from the moderates, who had previously occupied the urban scenarios with civic rituals in the name of the patriotism of Pius IX, up until his shift in policy.42

It is worth underlining that, when he spoke in 1848 of the need to promote the cult of martyrs of the homeland, Vannucci certainly had in mind a series of ritual modalities that had spread across the Pistoia area during previous years. I am referring to the Society for Parental Honours to Great Italians and above all to the pilgrimage to Gavínana to revere the mortal remains of Francesco Ferrucci. The Society, promoted by the Pistoia Academy of science, letters and arts, was founded at the end of 1821, and on 25 April 1822 it held its first solemn gathering, during which parental honours were paid to Torquato Tasso in the anniversary of his death.43 In 1825 such honours were paid to Dante Alighieri, and in 1827 to Cristoforo Colombo. Initially reserved to members of the Academy only, the Society’s meetings were later opened to citizens and became a vehicle for the diffusion of liberal and national ideals. Prohibited and suspended by the Grand Duchy authorities in 1831, they resumed in 1839 with the tribute to Michelangiolo, followed by the tribute to Galileo Galilei in 1845. In these two occasions, the Pistoia-born musician Giovanni Bracciolini composed arias and cantatas, whose arrangements for orchestra and choruses underline the popular celebration nature of the initiatives.

An even more emblematic story is that of the pilgrimage to Gavínana, which, inaugurated in private form by Massimo D’Azeglio in 1838, had spread in the follow-
ing decade to the point that even many years later this patriotic cult was still kept alive by numerous participants. The ritual, as Alberto Mario Banti has written, consisted in a collective expedition, during which participants visited the locations of the battle and death of Ferruccio; they would then proceed to search for fragments of weapons or bones scattered around the town, considered to be the remains of heroic fighters for Florentine freedom. When such fragments were found, they were conserved «like relics of saints». Then a religious function would be celebrated – if the local curate was in agreement – followed by group readings of passages from texts commemorating the event, in particular from the Assedic di Firenze by Guerrazzi, which appears to have been the preferred text for the occasion. The reading of commemorative texts, written specifically for the occasion, would conclude the typical ceremony.\footnote{Banti, La nazione del Risorgimento, 174. On the diffusion of civic rituals in Tuscany during «long Forty-eight» see A. Petrizzo, «Spazi dell’immaginario. Festa e discorso nazionale in Toscana tra 1847 e 1848», in: Storia d’Italia, 509–539. By the same author, see also «Appunti su rituali e politica», in: Contemporanea 10 (2007), 1, 157–167, and «Feste e rituali», in: Atlante culturale del Risorgimento, 75–85.}

### 3. The Success of the Patriotic Martyrology between 1848 and the Liberal Era

Vannucci’s work was met with great approval from the patriotic public opinion. The Florentine democratic newspaper *Il Popolano*, founded and directed by Enrico Montazio, deemed it a considerable book both in terms of «the elegance of the language», and of «the nobility of the patriotic sentiments» which animated it.\footnote{«Il Popolano», 16 September 1848. I have taken this quotation from G. Adami, *Atto Vannucci maestro di umanità e storico moralista*, Prato 1968, 149.} In 1850, Aurelio Saffi spoke of the volume in enthusiastic terms in *L’Italia del Popolo*.\footnote{See Banti, La nazione del Risorgimento, 171. Mazzini himself had asked Saffi to review Vannucci’s book, see: «G. Mazzini to A. Saffi», 26 [March 1850], in: Scritti editi ed inediti di Giuseppe Mazzini, Imola 1925, vol. 42, 188–189.} Many years later, Luigi Settembrini would define it as the «golden book of true Italian noblemen which every young person should know by heart», a book to be read «with fever in one’s soul, just like a novel».\footnote{Quoted in Adami, Atto Vannucci, 152.}

Exiled after the failure of the revolutionary attempts of 1848/49, Vannucci took refuge in Paris, where he abandoned his political commitments and dedicated his time to studying the classical period. However, just a few months later, having overcome the initial discouragement and disappointment, he returned to work on a new edition of the *Martyrs*. «At the present time» – he referred to Vieuvezux on 20 May 1850 – «I am working on a small volume regarding the martyrs of freedom who died while defending Rome. I have already collected a lot of material and hope to publish the book in Turin. It will be a third volume, completing the other two
published ones». Indeed, the book was published in Turin in 1850 by the Società editrice italiana publishing house. Ten years went by from that moment before Vannucci began considering the idea of a reprint of the Martyrs. In the meantime, his work gained many followers and, over the course of twenty years, many similar works, both in terms of inspiration and of contents, appeared, while others remained merely works in progress.

The first, and most important, of such works was the Pantheon of the Martyrs of Italian Freedom, published in two large volumes in Turin in 1851, «by a society of Italian emigrants»; the second edition was published just one year later. The structure of the book followed that of Vannucci’s Martyrs, and even the analysed chronological arc was the same, starting with the martyrs of the Neapolitan Republic and finishing with the inclusion of those in Rome and Venice in 1849. Mazzini, who attempted to favour the diffusion of the Pantheon of the Martyrs of Freedom in England by presenting it to Mudie’s Select Library, the well-known circulating library that revolutionised the British book market over the course of just a few years, considered the work, furnished with a rich gallery of portraits and engravings, to be «broader» than Vannucci’s text. And in July 1865, when a new edition – printed in 1861 – became available, he suggested its purchase to his friend the Countess Marie d’Agoult, better known by her pseudonym Daniel Stern, under which some of her works were published. In that occasion, while reminding her of the high tribute paid by democrats and republicans to the cause of Italian freedom, he wrote: «1821 excepté, il n’y a pas de martyrs monarchiques chez nous: ces messieurs ne conspirent pas, ils diplomatisent.»

During that same year, the translation from French of Lucien Bessières’s Panthéon des martyrs de la liberté, ou histoire des révolutions politiques et des personnages qui se sont dévoués pur le bien et la liberté des nations was published in Turin. A large-scale work, featuring no less than 736 pages, enriched by beautiful lithographs by Carlo Perrin, the volume began from ancient Greece and worked its way up to the first part of the nineteenth century. This work was yet another testimony of the widespread interest surrounding the theme of political martyrdom, which went through a new phase of intensity with the outbreak of the second war of independence, and its immediate aftermath.

49 See G. D’Amato (ed.), Panteon dei martiri della libertà italiana. Opera compilata da vari letterati pubblicata per cura di una società di emigrati italiani, Turin 1851.
50 See R. Sarti / N. Mayper (eds.), Dear Kate. Lettere inedite di Giuseppe Mazzini a Katherine Hill, Angelo Bezzi e altri italiani a Londra (1841–1871), Soveria Mannelli 2011, 192. The editors mistakenly write that Mazzini was attempting to promote Vannucci’s work, while it is quite clear that he was referring to the Turin-printed Pantheon.
52 The book was published by the printing house of Claudio Perrin.
In the spring of 1860 Vannucci’s third edition of his Martyrs was published, and was welcomed in Felice Le Monnier’s prestigious Biblioteca Nazionale. The intermediary between the two was their common friend Pietro Thouar; on 28 February 1860, when accepting the author’s conditions (a compensation of 200 Tuscan Lire and 24 free copies of the volume), Le Monnier wrote to Thouar: «If Mr. Vannucci will be sending me the beginning of the original work quite soon, I will conduct the printing as rapidly as possible, given that the moment for political works is now.» Just two months later, on 30 April 1860, the book had already been printed in 1500 copies and must have sold out quite rapidly: the publisher re-printed another 1000 copies as early as January 1862. It is also worth noting that, between November 1859 and the first months of 1860, a French translation of the Martyrs was published as an appendix in Espérance, a Geneva-printed newspaper.

Evidently, the extraordinary events of 1859/60 were stirring up interest from the press and publishers both in Italy and abroad, and in the turmoil of emotions accompanying the accomplishment of the unification process, the publication of works paying emotional tributes to those who had sacrificed their lives to reach the final result was deemed an opportune operation. The commemorative rituals increased in intensity during the expedition of the Mille. In Sicily, solemn ceremonies were held on multiple occasions to celebrate the martyrs of freedom, and the funerals of some of the fighters, such as Rosolino Pilo’s in Palermo, became rather spectacular affairs. While rapidly making their way towards Naples, through Calabria, the Garibaldines stopped in Cosenza to visit the location of the martyrdom of the Bandiera brothers. It has been theorised, reasonably, that «in 1860, Garibaldi’s dictatorship was planning the elaboration of an official cult of the nation’s martyrs, with the goal of promoting a religious-imprinted identification with the regime and of inciting men to fight and die for it». Thus, we should not be surprised that, during that same year, Le Monnier welcomed in his Biblioteca Nazionale another book that closely followed Vannucci’s work, the Italian Martyrology from 1792 to 1847 by Giuseppe Ricciardi. While the former, enriched and corrected, had come to feature 668 pages, the latter, by a democratic Neapolitan representative, written between 1847 and 1848 and published as an appendix of Diritto, only featured 250. Published in 1500 copies (50 of which went to the author as his only form of compensation) like Vannucci’s book, it was, according to Ricciardi, «far more important than Vannucci’s entitled The Martyrs of Italian Freedom» and would have enjoyed «certainly far greater sales».

54 See C. Ceccuti, Un editore del Risorgimento. Felice Le Monnier, Florence 1974, 495. 
56 Riall, «I martiri nostri son tutti risorti!», 36. 
58 Ceccuti, Un editore del Risorgimento, 390–391.
anticlerical Ricciardi emphasised the sacred dimension of martyrdom, underlining the need to build a memory soaked in religious devotion towards those who sacrificed their life for the homeland. And, after all, their numbers were so high that he could almost claim that «the annals of Italy are nothing but the succession of its martyrs».

During the early 1860s Le Monnier was not the only publisher who sensed within the book market a request for this genre of works. The Milanese editor Carlo Barbini promoted a series of volumes entitled *Pantheon of the martyrs of Italian freedom*, which was inaugurated in 1862 by two books by Felice Venosta, one about Ugo Bassi and the other regarding the martyrdom of Brescia. In 1862, Venosta, who was the author of many of the series’ volumes, also published a book on the *Martyrs of the Lombard Revolution*, in which, echoing Fosolian motifs, he indicated that a «religion of tombs» would be an educative apprenticeship capable of uniting «the remembrances of the family» with «the traditions of the motherland». In the name of a programmatic motto – «may the blood of Martyrs become the seed of heroes» – which projected the memory of patriotic martyrdom upon the horizon of the incomplete national Risorgimento, Venosta underlined the exemplary nature of the Milanese and Lombard events between 1847 and 1853. Indeed, he insisted on the more-than-local significance of his «memories» in the presumption, he stated, that despite the fact that the book described a «municipal» scenario, it was nonetheless «eminently Italian».

The goal of the Barbini series was precisely to offer an overview of «local» cases distributed across the entire peninsula, which were also strongly evocative of a «national» participation in the sacrifice for the independence of the homeland. Among the most prolific authors of the series was the Tuscan journalist and deputy Celestino Bianchi, a close collaborator of Bettino Ricasoli. As part of the series, in 1863 he published a volume on the 1848/49 defence of Venice and another on Ciro Menotti and the 1831 Modenese events, in 1864 a book on the Aspromonte martyrs, in 1868 a volume on Pellico and Maroncelli, and in 1869 another work on Pietro Fortunato Calvi. It is worth noting that the series also featured works by Luigi

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60 I will list a few, with their respective year of publication: Carlo Piscacane e compagni martiri a Sanza (1863); Roma e i suoi martiri, 1849 (1863); Toscani a Curtatone e a Montanara (1863); Rosolino Pilo e la rivoluzione siciliana (1863); I fratelli Bandiera e loro compagni martiri a Cosenza (1864); Guglielmo Pepe (1864); La battaglia di Novara (1864); Carlo Piscacane, Agesilao Milano ed altre vittime napoletane (1864); *Balilla o la cacciata degli austriaci da Genova, 1746* (1863); La lega lombarda. *Storia patria del XII secolo* (1866); Custoza e Lissa: fatti della guerra italiana del 1866 (1866); I fratelli Cairoli, 1848–1867 (1868); *Le cinque giornate di Milano, 18–22 marzo 1848* (1876); Felice Orsini (1881).
62 Ridolfi, *Martiri per la patria*, 94.
63 Venezia e i suoi difensori, 1848–49 (1863); Ciro
Stefanoni, one of the age’s main exponents of the free thought movement, who, in 1863, wrote the volume dedicated to Mazzini and, in 1867, the one regarding Francesco Nullo martyr in Poland. Barbini, as we can see, chose collaborators with diverse political and cultural inclinations, and was very attentive towards the current affairs of his time: he published what can be considered actual instant books on the events marking the last steps towards unification, which further lengthened the list of Italian martyrs: Aspromonte, Lissa, Mentana, Nullo’s expedition to aid the 1863 Polish insurrection.

Antonio Mugnaini’s book on the Martyrs for Italian Independence, first published in Florence in 1860, featured very different characteristics from the aforementioned works. As suggested by the subtitle, History of the Italian Upsets from 1815 to the Proclamation of the Reign of Italy. Featuring Brief Historical-biographical Accounts regarding the Savoy Household, the work was characterised by an unmistakably pro-Savoy approach, underlined by the periodisation chosen by the author: rather than turn back to observe the martyrs of the Jacobin and Napoleonic period, as the democratic authors did, he chose to start from the years of Restoration and insisted above all on the roles played by diplomacy and the royal army. The second volume was published in 1861 and the following year, when the second edition was printed, a third volume was also printed «with the addition – stated the title – of the Sicilian revolution, the expedition of general Garibaldi and the campaign against the Pope and the Bourbons up until the fall of Gaeta».

Before concluding this rapid overview, we must signal the Lives of Italians Meritorious of Freedom and of the Homeland by Mariano D’Ayala; its first volume, dedicated to those who had «died fighting», was published in Florence in 1868. D’Ayala, a former Bourbon soldier, had been one of the protagonists of the Neapolitan 1848 and, following the return of Ferdinand II, had sought refuge first in Tuscany, where he was the Minister of War in the Montanelli government, and later in Piedmont. In Turin he had collaborated on the Pantheon of the Martyrs of Italian Freedom, by compiling some profiles on patriots from the Southern provinces. The conservation of the memory of martyrs of Italian freedom and independence was still at the centre of his occupations between 1860 and 1861, when he published four small volumes in quick succession on Tuscan who Died in the Battles of 1859 and on the Neapolitan and Sicilian patriot victims of the Bourbon repression. In 1883, six years after his
death, a second volume of the *Lives of Italians Meritorious* was printed, regarding those who had been «killed by the executioner».

Therefore Vannucci could rightfully consider himself to be the initiator of a literary genre that had become well affirmed in the 1860s in Italy. In 1868, a small extract from his *Martyrs*, regarding the **Carbonari in the Lombard-Venetian area in 1821**, was published in Milan, promoted by the provincial administration; a second edition of the extract was printed the following year. And yet his relationship with Le Monnier, which had always been rather formal – and had rapidly deteriorated since 1866, when the publishing house was sold by its owner – fell through irremediably between the end of 1869 and the beginning of 1870.

Now free from any contractual clause, and having regained full printing rights on his works, Vannucci welcomed Milanese editor Emilio Treves's offer to publish a fifth edition of the *Martyrs*, which was printed in 1872, «with many corrections and additions». A few years later came the sixth edition, also presented as a volume «with many additions and corrections», which was printed in three volumes between 1877 and 1880 by the Milanese publisher Bortolotti. This was the last version edited by Vannucci in person. At the moment of his death, on 9 June 1883, he was preparing a new edition and in his will, in which he left the ownership of the book to Cesira Siciliani, he disposed that any future editions should take into consideration «all the corrections and added modifications» he had made in the 1880 edition. The seventh edition was printed in two volumes between 1886 and 1887, this time in instalments and «splendidly illustrated», an eloquent clue that the publisher was expecting a vast success.

The theme of martyrdom was hardly absent in Italian political-literary culture at the end of the century. For example, let us quote the writings and orations by a figure such as Felice Cavallotti, who was capable of binding together, over the course of his life, the Risorgimento epopee with the new forms of political and civic commitment of post-unity democracy. As early as 1868, he printed a memoir regarding the unfortunate expedition of Mentana, which was re-printed the following year in a **Book Series on Italian Martyrs**. In 1880, for the inauguration of the Milanese monument to the «martyrs of Mentana», Cavallotti wrote one of his most successful lyrics, *The March of Leonidas*, and twelve years later he published an **Italian Martyro-**

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69 *I martiri della libertà Italiana dal 1794 al 1848. Memorie raccolte da Atto Vannucci. Splendidly illustrated seventh edition, left by the author to his heirs so that it could be re-printed with the new corrections and additions*, Milan 1886–1887, 2 vol.
logy in which he attempted to refresh readers’ memories regarding Santorre di Santarosa, the martyrs of Ribiera and those executed in 1833.\textsuperscript{71}

Even in the Italy of Giolitti, Atto Vannucci’s Martyrs were not forgotten, and a few partial editions of the book were published and probably sold quite well, given that numerous re-prints were also prepared. They began with a Milanese edition dated 1900,\textsuperscript{72} followed by a Florentine one by Barbèra in 1906, edited by Rosolino Guastalla. Initially included in the Collection of Educative Works, in 1925 it was included in the fifth edition of the series Patriotic readings for schools and families.\textsuperscript{73}

In 1931 the work was published in two volumes by Vallecchi, who assigned its editing to Ettore Fabietti: \textsuperscript{74} “a historian-divulgator”, wrote Spadolini remembering his emotional reading of the volumes during the summer of 1935, “in whom one could sense an aura of faith in the values of democracy and of freedom, which survived during those years as a residue of ancient experiences”.\textsuperscript{75}

We must however ask ourselves if that umpteenth edition of Vannucci’s work, in the Mussolinian Florence of the early Thirties – what Salvemini called “fascistopoli” – did not correspond by then to other ways of reasoning, and more precisely, to the attempt to build a legacy between Risorgimento martyrs and «fascist martyrs». That same year was the tenth anniversary of the Tuscan clashes of 1921, and Mussolini, within his message to the Florentine Fascist Federation, wrote: «I know how much the 1922 revolution owes to the Tuscan uprising of 1921. The fallen young camice nere have made Tuscany a region where fascism is always vigilant. We remember our dead and march onwards ever more rapidly. This is their order».\textsuperscript{76} Three years later, on 27 October 1934, the crypt of Santa Croce was opened to welcome the bodies of 37 Florentine «martyrs» who died for the fascist cause before the march on Rome or due to wounds they had suffered during the clashes. The transportation of their corpses into the nation’s Pantheon represented one of the most emblematic moments of fascism’s attempt to make fascist squad action, through the cult of its fallen representatives, into the founding myth of the victorious revolution.\textsuperscript{77} At the
same time, it underlined the evident link to the honours paid by Risorgimento and post-unitary Italy to the «martyrs of freedom», ever since the appearance of the first edition of Vannucci’s book in 1848.78

From the Italian from Benjamin Ginsborg.

The Religion of the Homeland. The Cult of «Martyrs of Freedom» in Nineteenth-Century Italy

In recent years, the historiography of the Risorgimento has been transformed by a new approach that began with the so-called linguistic turn. One particularly stimulating element of such studies are attempts to read the cult of martyrs as a motive for patriotic volunteering, and as one of the tools used by the Risorgimento movement, starting with Mazzini, to convert people to the nationalist cause. This article outlines the development of martyr literature in Italy from the early nineteenth century up to Fascism. The author distinguishes his approach from other scholars to argue that, with the partial exception of Mazzini, those who participated in the construction of patriotic martyr cults were strongly anti-clerical. They attempted to build a civic religion, which consciously drew elements from traditional Christian religion in order to utilise its symbols and liturgies. At the same time, the cults remained firmly fixed within a secular culture.

Das Heimatland als Religion. Der Kult um die «Märtyrer der Freiheit» in Italien im 19. Jahrhundert


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