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Secularisation, anticlericalism, and cremation within Italian cemeteries of the nineteenth century

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This article examines the monumental cemeteries of nineteenth-century Italy with respect to their role as platforms for the tensions between Church and state. In that burial grounds were publically owned yet administered by the clergy, they represented a space where conflicts between secular and clerical powers might be played out – conflicts which reached a peak in the final decades of the Ottocento following the annexation of the Papal State to unified Italy. Particular attention is given to the adoption of cremation as a practice that was advocated by anticlerical, liberal, and radical factions in opposition to the Catholic Church. That opposition was manifested in the design and layout of Italian burial grounds and in construction of new crematoria.

Keywords: nineteenth century; cremation; anticlericalism; secularisation; Freemasonry; liberalism; architecture; cemeteries

Introduction

Throughout the nineteenth century, Italian cemeteries acted as arenas within which tensions between Church and state were acted out. The construction of large, public burial grounds on the outskirts of many Italian cities coincided with a redistribution of power from religious to public authorities, which resulted partly from Napoleonic legislation of the early 1800s prohibiting burial within urban boundaries. From the early nineteenth century, monumental cemeteries emerged across Italy that were radically different from earlier graveyards in that they were secular and publically owned, and embodied a substantial architectural framework that was funded by public investment. Through their scale and grandeur, they signalled both the power of local councils and of

the bourgeoning nation-state. The reformation in burial practices put an end to Christian traditions of church interment that persisted since the middle ages, and transferred responsibility for the dead from the Church to the municipality – a process of secularisation which meant that the clergy lost some of its control over death and access to burial fees. Nor was the administration of funerary rituals the only point of contention as the power of the Church was threatened by political interests that were intent on extending their influence on a number of fronts (Borutta 2012). In fact, nineteenth-century Italy was swept by waves of secularism and anticlericalism that expressed a range of ambitions associated with radicalism, atheism, and freethinkers, and which evolved mainly within cities in the north and centre of the peninsula (Verucci 1981, 3-4). In that respect, the Breach of Porta Pia (1870) and the absorption of the Papal State into a unified Italy represented major sources of conflict that soured relationships between the new Italian state and the Vatican, and which raised issues that were not formally resolved until the Lateran Pacts of 1929 restricted papal sovereignty to the Vatican State (Beales and Biagini 2002, 153-4). Whereas, prior to unification, relations between public and clerical powers were often problematic, tensions increased after 1870 as the homogenisation of the legal system across Italy accelerated the pace of secularisation (Macry 1988, 70). Moreover, the opposition of Italy's new rulers to the Church provided a platform from which political interests could harness additional support for the new nation-state (Verucci 1981, 65; Borutta 2012, 207).

The aim of this article is to explore the impact of conflicts between the Church and political authorities with respect to the architecture of nineteenth-century Italian cemeteries. Particular attention is given to cremation as a contested issue in the relationships between state and clerical interests, and to the manner in which those relationships were expressed in the design and construction of crematoria. However, it

is important not to overstate the binary nature of the opposition between secular and clerical powers, as liberals, atheists, and some Catholic reformers shared comparable views with regard to secularisation and the role of the clergy in funerary rituals. Within Catholic circles, a relatively strong movement for reform was founded on the idea that the spiritual renewal of the Church was dependent on its disassociation from temporal power (Verucci 1981, 4-8). Moreover, differing, and nuanced, positions were adopted within the various faiths regarding the roles of religion and the state. Different factions elected to defend or oppose clerical privileges, sometimes from positions that masked a wider social or political agenda (Verucci 1981, 69). Meanwhile, a significant part of the Italian population remained relatively uninterested in the issues associated with secularisation. Regional differences throughout Italy meant that levels of anticlericalism and the attachment to religious traditions varied considerably, and the power of the Church remained relatively entrenched in the countryside and most of the south (Macry 1988, 76; Conti et al. 1998, 95-103). It is also important that, for some of its supporters, secularisation did not imply the abandonment of religious faith. An examination of Neapolitan wills from the second half of the nineteenth century demonstrates that, during that period, there was a marked reduction in the number of donations given to the Church. However, it also shows that the number of appeals regarding the afterlife that were made to God, the Madonna, or saints, remained constant throughout that century, which may suggest a decline in the power held by the clergy rather than in religious belief (Macry 1988, 74-6). Moreover, that study noted the appearance of references to the 'fatherland' in Neapolitan wills written in the late 1800s; as exemplified, in 1891, by a father's appeal to his son to love 'God, the Fatherland and family' ('*Iddio, la Patria e la famiglia*', Macry 1988, 76).[1] Those references point to the emergence of a form of nationalism that might have existed as a 'patriotic religion' in

opposition to the power of the Church and the clergy, but which allowed for a more ambiguous approach to faith.

The tensions and rivalries between the Church and public authorities were exacerbated by the fact that, whereas by the mid-nineteenth century most burial grounds were public, they were administered by the clergy and served a Catholic majority. Reforms of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries brought most cemeteries under public jurisdiction (Conti et al. 1998, 252). However, the next step towards secular and multi-denominational burial grounds was secured by legislation that was introduced into a unified Italy in 1865, and which was extended to Venetia and Rome in 1866 and 1870, respectively (Isastia 1998, 56). That legislation was intended to impose multi-denominationalism within public cemeteries in the form of areas designated for non-Catholics, and particularly for Protestants, Jews, and Orthodox Christians. Although the reform maintained the separation of the dead within a common burial ground, it went against a long tradition of segregation involving separate graveyards, and met with resistance from some clerical and lay members of the Catholic Church.[2] Equally, the inclusion of atheists within public cemeteries was seen to be controversial. Resistance also stemmed from the fact that, whereas the central government determined the legislation concerning burial, the design and construction of cemeteries fell to the municipal authorities.

Cemeteries and the conflict between clerical and secular powers

The Verano cemetery in Rome illustrates the difficulties that arose in the Ottocento from tensions between the Church and political interests. Although founded by the Napoleonic regime in 1811, the Verano was completed after 1855 by the restored Pope Pius IX (reigned 1846-1878) and its completion reflected attempts to transfer control

over funerary practices from the lower clergy to the papal government (Isastia 1998, 56). In 1870, responsibility for the dead was removed from the papal authorities to the Italian state, although elements of the clergy retained an administrative role within burial grounds. Whereas the new Italian government tried to bring Rome into line with national legislation with respect to the inclusion of non-Catholics within public cemeteries, traditionalists and clergymen fought to maintain the Verano as an exclusively Catholic cemetery. In the 1870s and 1880s, and in the wake of Rome's annexation to unified Italy, there was an atmosphere of tension between liberal and conservative factions, and between political authorities and the Vicariate of Rome (as the Pope's representative in the Roman diocese). In 1872, the clergy protested that the Verano cemetery had been 'polluted' by the burial of a Protestant, which led to the exhumation of the corpse and its removal to the non-Catholic cemetery in the Testaccio area of Rome (Krogel 1995, 59-60). In 1876, the burial of an atheist within the Verano cemetery proved to be equally contentious (Isastia 1998, 59-61). Such was the strength of the Church's resistance in Rome that it was not until 1911 that regulation was passed to establish areas for non-Catholics within the Verano cemetery (Isastia 1998, 57).

In 1881, the monumental cemetery in Lucca (begun in 1811) was under clerical administration when its custodian, Padre Ignazio, addressed an indignant letter of complaint to the municipal authorities (Lucca, Archivio Storico, Prot. Gen. 1370 del 1850, Letter of 23 June 1881). The body of Vincenzo Coletti, a professed atheist, was to be buried within the non-Catholic area of Lucca's cemetery in accordance with regulation. However, in the early hours of the morning before Coletti's funeral, a group of his friends broke into the cemetery and buried his body in a vacant grave within the Catholic area of the cemetery. From the archival documentation, which includes letters from Coletti's supporters and the blacksmith employed to break into the cemetery, it is

uncertain what measures, if any, were taken by the local council in response to this violation. Such cases serve to highlight the conflicts that underlay the planning and organisation of Italian cemeteries.

In Cagliari, in 1842, when the Catholic authorities requested permission to renovate the monumental cemetery of Bonaria (established in 1827) that request was categorically denied by the municipality, which claimed exclusive control of the burial ground on the basis that it had been publically funded since its foundation (*Cagliari* 1998, 20-1). Equally, in 1844, the local council in Naples passed measures that gave it the power to counteract the influence of the local *congreghe*, or religious confraternities; particularly, in terms of the location, format, and size of monuments erected by the *congreghe* within the cemetery (Buccaro 1985, 82-3). The existence of such measures in the southern city of Naples highlights the difficulties in drawing stark distinctions between north and south with regards to the power of the Church. That difficulty is also evidenced by the fact that, in 1845, the Archbishop of Turin commended the local council for having submitted the project for the extension of the city's public cemetery for his approval (Turin, Archivio Storico della Città, Carte Sciolte, n. 4815, "Discorso pronunziato il 30 Ottobre 1845 per la Benedizione del nuovo Campo Santo di Torino", 30 Oct. 1845).

The revival of cremation

Perhaps the most contentious issue associated with Italian cemeteries of the Ottocento was the development of cremation, which was highly important in terms of the evolution of Italian funerary architecture and as a major element in the *Kulturkampf*, or 'culture war', between the Church and secular authorities (Papenheim 2003, 202; Borutta 2012, 191-2). In part, the impact of cremation on the architecture of Italian cemeteries can be understood in terms of the historical context from which it emerged

(Curl 2002, 299-314; Davies 2005, xviii-xxiv). Whereas cremation was a common funerary rite amongst the upper classes in ancient Greece and Rome, the early Christian preference for interment meant that it fell into disuse within Europe from the fourth century. Inhumation remained the common mode of burial for Christians throughout medieval and early modern periods – a preference that was upheld by the Catholic Church, which forbade cremation on historical and religious grounds until 1963 (Davies 2005, 111). Cremation was seen to be at odds with the funerary traditions of the Church and the example of Christ's entombment. It was also said to destroy the body as created by God, and it was feared that a cremated corpse could not be 'reassembled' at the resurrection of the dead. In defiance of that interdiction, cremation enjoyed a relative popularity within radical circles in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and was promoted by the French revolutionary government in 1797 as part of a decree against the Catholic Church (Masini 1978, 147). However, it was not until the nineteenth century that the practice of cremation became widespread within Europe, and its re-introduction resulted in the construction of crematoria in many European countries.

It is remarkable that, despite the Church's stance on cremation, its revival originated partly in Catholic Italy (Davies 2005, 273-5). From the late 1860s, Italian scientists and engineers such as Celeste Clericetti, Giovanni Polli, and Paolo Gorini pioneered new and innovative techniques for cremation that were openly endorsed by doctors, liberals, philanthropic associations, and rationalist thinkers. In addition, Protestant, Jewish, and evangelical groups maintained calls for the introduction of cremation that paralleled scientific progress in the field. The combined efforts of individuals and groups contributed towards the legitimisation of cremation in 1874, which rendered Italy a major international force in a radical change in funerary practices. The first modern European crematorium was built in 1876 in the

Monumentale cemetery of Milan with funds endowed by the Protestant businessman Alberto Keller on his death in 1874. In 1876, Keller's corpse was the first to be cremated in the new crematorium, which also marked the first cremation in a closed receptacle in Europe – an event that was followed closely by the press (Figure 1, Gorini 1876, 95-7).

Given the Catholic Church's resistance to cremation it is interesting that Italy preceded countries such as Britain, Germany, and France, in terms of its adoption; particularly, in that religious interests did not generally oppose its emergence in Protestant countries.[3] Whereas the practice of cremation evolved at a relatively slower pace within northern Europe, in Italy opposition from the Catholic Church may have boosted its popularity within anticlerical and radical groups. The first calls for cremation came largely from scientific and medical circles. In 1857, the scientist Ferdinando Coletti (1819-1881) spoke in favour of cremation to the Academy of Sciences, Letters, and Arts in Padua, and his speech catalysed a wide following among doctors and scientists. Cremation appealed to a rationalist mind-set that was influenced by the Enlightenment, and which endorsed the principles of progress and philanthropy (Gorini 1876, VII-XV). It was also part of wider efforts to improve hygiene in cities (Conti et al. 1998, 118-24). For example, the physician and Freemason Gaetano Pini (1846-1887) advocated incineration in a bid for cleanliness and the suppression of disease in Italy's expanding cities (Pini 1885). Although the pro-cremation movement emerged within scientific circles that were largely secular, it was not anti-religious in origin in that it was primarily motivated by hygienic, economic, and ethical concerns (Masini 1978, 145; Verucci 1981, 235; Conti et al. 1998, 94). However, from the 1860s, the subject of cremation was also adopted by the government, and was covered by various publications and journals.

The government's involvement embodied political motives that went beyond the need for an efficient mode of disposal of the dead. Cremation represented a means to reduce the power of the Church and clerical interference in funerary matters, and formed part of a wider strategy to impose equality in the treatment of the dead (Conti et al. 1998, 188-9). It was also adopted as a battle cry by journals such as *Il Libero Pensiero* and *Il Libero Pensatore*, and by proponents of liberalism, republicanism, and radicalism, as ideologies that were rooted in the Risorgimento (Verucci 1981, 65; Borutta 2012, 207).[4] Whereas cremation was endorsed by members of the radical Left, which included Salvatore Morelli, Agostino Bertani, and Felice Cavallotti, the movement remained urban and bourgeois in character and, with the notable exceptions of Filippo Turati and Andrea Costa, socialism played a relatively minor role (Conti et al. 1998, 104). In contrast, from 1874, Freemasonry played a central part in the promotion of cremation as a practice that suited a political agenda centred on anticlericalism, liberalism, and the endorsement of scientific and social progress (Verucci 1981, 179-271; Isastia 1998, 84-7; Davies 2005, 207-12). Indeed, many of the major supporters of cremation, from powerful politicians to authoritative scientists, were Freemasons.

Arguments regarding practicality, hygiene, and morality were raised in support of cremation (for the debate surrounding cremation: Masini 1978, 145-54; Isastia 1998, 62-5; Malamani 2000; Novarino and Prestia 2006, 13-24; for pro-cremation literature: Homunculus 1872a, 1872b, 1872c; Zucchetti 1875; Gorini 1876; Pini 1885). At one level, cremation was promoted as a more efficient way to dispose of the dead in the face of demographic growth and urban in-migration that put a strain on existing cemeteries. It was also encouraged on hygienic grounds in that interment was thought to pollute the air, soil, and water. In short, cremation was portrayed as an enlightened funerary rite

that was engendered by scientific advancements. In addition, it was seen to preserve human dignity in that it avoided decomposition, and guaranteed equality as 'the mortal remains of the millionaire and the dispossessed, the genius and the idiot, the timid and the ruthless would be preserved equally within identical urns' ('*Il milionario e l'indigente, l'uomo di genio e l'idiota, il timido e il soverchiatore, mostreranno i loro mortali avanzi del pari raccolti in urne uniformi*', Gorini 1876, 219). As ashes could be preserved in the family home, in gardens, and even in churches, cremation might allow the bereaved to retain contact with the dead, which was thought to be morally edifying. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, this capacity to afford proximity to the remains of the dead gained greater significance as cremationists sought to counteract the relocation of cemeteries to the suburbs.

Although some supporters of cremation insisted on its ancient heritage, its Catholic opponents held that it was contrary to tradition, nature, popular sentiment, and religion (Maestri 1883, 1888; Bianchetti 1888). It was also argued that incineration was uneconomical as, in the nineteenth century, it was more expensive than interment due to the length of the procedure and the consumption of large quantities of combustible material. Whereas opponents of cremation highlighted the risk of being burnt alive in case of apparent death, cremationists pointed out that incineration would avert the danger of being buried alive – which illustrates how both sides fashioned arguments relating to the public good (Brunetti 1875). In general, cremation was portrayed by its supporters as part of a struggle against prejudice and religion, and as a philanthropic and humanist endeavour propagated by 'the enlightened avant-garde of human civilisation' that promoted the 'supreme principles of freedom and tolerance, which are the only true religion of civilised peoples' ('*illuminata avanguardia dell'umano incivilimento*', Guidini 1881, 21; '*Le rétablissement de la crémation est un hommage aux suprêmes*

principes de liberté et de tolérance, qui sont la vraie et seule religion des peoples civilisés', Pini 1885, 172). Conversely, the Church's defence of inhumation masked its hostility to the secularisation of society, and acted as a key element in its resistance to liberalism, radicalism, and Freemasonry in the period following the conquest of Rome in 1870. In 1874, the year in which cremation was legalised in Italy, Pope Pius IX prohibited Catholics from participating in national elections, 'neither to elect, nor to be elected' ('*né eletti né elettori*', Spadolini 1954, 150-1 and 178-80). Although that interdiction was not rigorously observed, it expressed the divided nature of a society within which cremation was a major political issue.[5] In 1886, the Vatican reacted against what was termed 'the nauseating human rotisserie' with a decree threatening cremationists with excommunication, which was not withdrawn until 1963 ('*nauseante rosticceria umana*', *La rivista antimassonica*, quoted in Novarino and Prestia 2006, 33).[6] However, as already stated, the support awarded to cremation was by no means clear-cut, or limited to liberals and atheists. It was advocated by some members of the Catholic laity and clergy within the context of a liberal movement for the reformation of Catholicism and for the separation of the Church from temporal matters (Verucci 1981, 4-8; Conti et al. 1998, 17 and 93; Papenheim 2003, 202). Thus, the debate regarding cremation was played out between reformist and conservative elements in Italian society, and major institutions in the form of the Church, Freemasons, and the government.

It is significant that the first official cremation in 1876 coincided with the fall of the *Destra storica* and the rise of the Left, and that it took place in Milan as the industrial capital of Italy. Italy's primacy with respect to cremation was viewed by some as a mark of international prestige, and over the next few decades a number of crematoria were erected in cities in northern and central Italy (Gorini 1876, 115).

Generally, those crematoria resulted from collaboration between local councils and a *Società della Cremazione*, as a local society for the promotion and administration of cremation that operated mainly on the basis of bequests, private donations, and subscriptions drawn from its members. Depending on the dominant political opinion in any individual city, a civic council might also subsidise the building of a crematorium through public funds, or perhaps provide a site – an obligation which was imposed on councils by law in 1888 (Conti et al. 1998, 159-63).

Support for cremation was relatively strong in the major cities of northern and central Italy, within which there was a tradition of anticlericalism and freethinking, and among the educated and professionals as members of an emergent middle class. In fact, research by the historian Fulvio Conti (1998, 91-2) shows that, between 1876 and 1910, approximately 50 per cent of those cremated belonged to a professional middle class and a further 20 per cent to a land-owning aristocracy. In the decades beyond 1876, and following the development of crematoria in Milan and other northern cemeteries, the new *templi crematori* (cremation temples) carried out a small, yet rising, number of cremations. In contrast, within southern Italy, political conservatism, the relative absence of an educated middle class, and the strength of the Church, hindered the development of cremation. In fact, as late as 1998, only one of thirty-seven crematoria was in the south of Italy (Conti et al. 1998, 95). Equally, rural areas throughout Italy were not generally served by what was essentially an urban, liberal, and bourgeois phenomenon.

The architecture of cremation

The architecture of Italian crematoria was shaped, in part, by anticlericalism and liberalism, but also by the ambition to render cremation more acceptable through the use of traditional aesthetics and known architectural conventions (Pini 1885, 14-68;

Davies 2005, 24-8). In that cremation was a relatively unprecedented function, the crematorium was effectively a new building type and its development throughout Europe has been compared to that of the first railway stations (Davies 2005, 19). New practical and aesthetic requirements meant that architects were faced with new questions regarding style and planning formats, although some opted for models that originated from established architectural typologies. In 1881, the architect Augusto Guidini (1853-1928) described how 'as soon as a new idea appears on the cultural horizon of an epoch, architecture creates a new language to express it' ('*Appena un'idea nuova spunta sull'orizzonte intellettuale di un'epoca, l'architettura crea la parola nuova per esprimerla*', Guidini 1881, 42). The design of crematoria was beset by issues that stemmed from a clash between the functional demands of cremation and the emotional needs of the bereaved (Bond 1967). It also ran parallel with the development of new, and appropriate, rituals. Whereas the public might require an architecture that afforded dignity and was reassuringly familiar, the complex machinery associated with incineration called for specific planning solutions and presented a reality that designers might seek to embrace or conceal. The crematorium constituted a new and evolving technology that was potentially noisy and malodorous, and which presented particular issues with regards to the dispersal of fumes, the passage of the coffin to the furnace, and whether to conceal the entrance to the furnace in order to shield the bereaved for the most basic reality of cremation (Gorini 1876, 99-100). Faced with these challenges, some architects looked to traditional aesthetics. Others seized the opportunity to devise 'new' or hybrid architectural languages and to adopt a more direct and candid approach to technological and planning issues. In general, however, the need to establish cremation as an acceptable funerary practice promoted an interest in monumentality, solemnity, and architecture that might appeal to the collective memory. Historicism

dominated the architecture of crematoria between the 1870s and the end of the century, although stylistic differences emerged from the manner in which historical sources were interpreted. Some designers sought to promote cremation and to satisfy the emotional needs of the bereaved by stressing a sense of continuity with the past through associations drawn from conventional architectural formats. However, others sought to reject convention and religious orthodoxy through architecture that presented cremation as a progressive means of disposing of the dead within a more enlightened culture.

The crematorium in Milan was built in 1876 to a neo-Greek design by the architect Carlo Maciachini, who also designed the Lombard Romanesque framework of the Monumentale cemetery (1863). The Doric colonnade, distyle temple-front, urns, and blazing flames of the crematorium carried meanings that conveyed a sense of timelessness, permanence, and immortality, and perhaps a reference to cremation as an ancient funerary rite (Figure 2; Davies 2005, 26). Between 1880 and 1883, additions were made to each side of the main building to accommodate columbaria for the storage of cremated remains. The interior was also re-arranged so that the corpse could be placed on a trolley that slid on rails from the mortuary chamber to the furnace door, which opened automatically – a solution that was seen to endow the process of cremation with greater dignity (Figure 3; Pini 1885, 35). In 1896, a comparable layout was devised after further changes were made to the crematorium by the architect Augusto Guidini (Figure 4; Davies 2005, 26).

The crematorium in the monumental cemetery of Turin, which was built by the architect Pompeo Marini in 1888, is also neoclassical and embodies a porticoed Doric columbarium that was added for the storage of cremated remains by Daniele Donghi in 1898 (Figure 5). The crematoria at Pisa and Florence, built in 1883 and 1884 respectively, were also faced with classical temple-fronts (Figure 6). However,

medieval styles were also adopted; for example, in 1896 in Siena for a crematorium that was designed by Augusto Corbi (1837-1901) to resemble a Romanesque church, and which has a recessed portal and protruding façade that are reminiscent of octagonal baptisteries in the Tuscan tradition. Whereas medievalism placed the crematorium within the realm of traditional ecclesiastical architecture, historicism in any form might serve to supress the controversial nature of cremation. The exploitation of tradition and local architectural sources might also be backed by regionalism and civic pride.

The design of Italy's crematoria can also be examined in terms of the treatment of the furnace and the chimney as major architectural elements of the new building type. In Carlo Maciachini's original design for Milan of 1876, and prior to later alterations, the furnace was contained within a classical sarcophagus (Figure 2). In 1883, that strategy was also adopted at the crematorium in Brescia (Figure 7). In Florence, in 1893, it was decided to decorate a plain and functional furnace with a sandstone veneer carved in a Gothic style. In Milan, Maciachini drew on medieval sources to disguise the chimney (now destroyed) as a Romanesque belfry (Figure 2). Similarly, in Cremona, in 1883, the chimney was hidden within a classical column (Figure 8). In 1881, the architect Augusto Guidini, an ardent supporter of cremation, created a theoretical project that combined a furnace masked as a sarcophagus with a smokestack in the guise of a Doric column.

The furnace, which constituted the heart of the crematorium, was an industrial product that was generally prefabricated and marketed by one of a number of competing manufacturers. Thus, Celeste Clericetti, an engineer and inventor of techniques for cremation, exposed a common problem when he underlined the importance of 'preserving all the appearance of a funerary ceremony and distracting from the industrial features' of the crematorium ('*mantenere tutta l'apparenza di una cerimonia*

funebre e distogliere da ogni artifizio industriale', quoted in Guidini 1881, 43). Moreover, in some projects, that problem was in the hands of engineers and inventors rather than architects. For example, in 1887, the Società di Cremazione in Bologna affirmed that 'the machinery for cremation must proceed in step and in harmony with the rest of the construction, which cannot be obtained, if the designer of the furnace is not the designer of the entire building' ('*l'impianto degli apparecchi crematori dovendo procedere di pari passo e in armonia col rimanente della costruzione ciò non potrebbe ottenersi, se il costruttore degli apparecchi non fosse anche il costruttore di tutto l'edificio*', Bologna, Archivio Storico del Comune, Carteggio amministrativo, VIII, letter of 24 Oct. 1887). Nonetheless, Giuseppe Venini, the inventor of the 'Venini' furnace, who was charged with the design of a crematorium for the Certosa cemetery in Bologna chose the path of concealment. Completed in 1888, Venini's crematorium was decorated with urns, acroteria, and door surrounds, which were perhaps intended to suggest solemnity and render cremation more acceptable to the general public (Figure 9; Bologna, Archivio Storico del Comune, Contratti con privati, 6, 1888).

Historicism and concealment were generally intended to promote cremation and to encourage its adoption rather than underline its origins within radical politics and progressive social circles. Efforts to mask furnaces and chimneys indicated an awareness of cultural and emotional sensitivities. However, orthodox forms of historicism were sometimes set aside in favour of architectural formats that were meant to distinguish between cremation and conventional forms of burial. Whereas eclecticism was not uncommon in the architecture of late nineteenth-century Italy, with respect to crematoria it gave rise to designs that were evidently innovative. The crematorium at Lodi was amongst the most original (Figure 10; Guidini 1881, 22-9). Its construction was funded directly by the civic authorities rather than by a Società di Cremazione – a

relatively rare situation that was described in a plaque on the façade of the crematorium as a source of civic pride (Pini 1885, 39). The crematorium at Lodi was also the second to be built in Italy in that it was completed in 1877, or a year after the crematorium in Milan. The original design was created by the scientist and inventor Paolo Gorini, an idealistic patriot and a friend of Giuseppe Mazzini, whose corpse Gorini was charged with embalming. Whereas the furnace of the crematorium at Lodi was encased in a sarcophagus, the overall composition was dominated by a large chimney that was decorated by colonnettes, urns, and cross-shaped air vents – a structure reminiscent of the ancient lighthouse of Alexandria. Although clad in recognizable historical references, and fitted with a furnace that was intended, according to Gorini, to satisfy 'aesthetics and the eye', the design of the crematorium at Lodi was broadly utilitarian ('*l'occhio e il senso estetico*', Gorini 1876, 218). The space of the interior was limited to the furnace, and the public were encouraged to watch the process of incineration through openings set within the external walls – a solution that was widely praised amongst the supporters of cremation for its efficiency (Guidini 1881, 19).

The crematorium at the Verano cemetery in Rome, which was opened in 1883, demonstrates how crematoria carried meanings that were expressed through uncommon architectural languages. The design of the crematorium reflected an array of Egyptian and Greek models. Prior to alterations in 1929, it embodied a cube surmounted by a stepped pyramidal roof, and was reminiscent of the pyramids of ancient Egypt and the mausoleum of Halicarnassus (Figure 11). The use of Egyptian motifs was commonplace in funerary architecture of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and was associated with timelessness and the after-life. However, beyond the Restoration (1815) its popularity declined due to associations with Jacobinism, Napoleon's Egyptian campaign (1798-1801), and the burial of non-Catholics and Freemasons (Merz 2007,

310-4 and 317-20). The crematorium at the Verano incorporated two Egyptian columns that, together with the pyramid, constituted Masonic symbols and signalled the involvement of Freemasons – for whom the construction of the crematorium represented a victory following two years of opposition from the Vatican and Rome's municipal authorities (Isastia 1998, 65-78; on Egyptian symbolism in Masonic architecture: Curl 1994, 134-5). Thus, as with the role of medievalism as a vehicle of civic pride in Siena, the design of the crematorium in Rome demonstrates how different architectural formats might express imperatives associated with specific local groups.

Whereas it is possible to identify different and even opposing trends in the design of Italian crematoria that ranged from the conciliatory to the assertive, it is also important that those crematoria were built within public cemeteries dominated by a Catholic majority, which was committed to inhumation as the traditional form of burial. Crematoria expressed different responses to the architectural contexts established by neighbouring buildings and tombs, and the willingness to adapt was influenced by the attitudes of designers and their patrons to the religious and cultural issues associated with cremation. In the Staglieno cemetery in Genoa, the crematorium was clad in the Doric order in accordance with the portico from which it is accessed (Figures 12-13). In contrast, whereas the main buildings of the cemetery in Milan are eclectic Lombard Romanesque, the crematorium, which is also by the architect Carlo Maciachini, is in a classical style that might suggest a desire to distinguish cremation as a new funerary rite.

Whereas the Church resisted the introduction of cremation, it also attempted to ensure that crematoria were constructed in secondary locations within public burial grounds, or on external sites adjoining cemeteries. In the clashes that resulted between a Società di Cremazione and the Church, the national government generally backed the

demands of the crematorists, whereas municipal authorities frequently sided with the clergy (as shown in Rome: Isastia 1998, 69). That may have been due to the nature of local politics as opposed to the positions assumed by national governments, and particularly by parliamentarians on the Left. In most instances, legislation concerning burial that was imposed by national government met with a degree of resistance from local councils, and while relationships between the central government and the Vatican were generally tense, closer ties might exist between the municipal authorities and local clergy (Conti et al. 1998, 109 and 148). Thus, the relative prominence and scale of individual crematoria offered some measure of the secular power of the citizenry and anticlerical sentiment within the parent city. For instance, in Bologna in 1887, the local council under pressure from Catholic groups decided that the crematorium would be built next to the Certosa cemetery in a separate area and with an independent entrance, supposedly 'in homage to true freedom' ('*in omaggio alla vera libertà*', Bologna, Archivio Storico del Comune, Carteggio amministrativo, VIII, 7, 1887; also, Conti et al. 1998, 153-8). Projects associated with crematoria were also abandoned; for example, at the San Michele cemetery in Venice plans drawn up in 1877 for the creation, in a prime location, of a columbarium for the storage of ashes were never realised (Meneghin 1962, 120). In 1882, a Catholic chapel was built in its place. In contrast, it was perhaps indicative of the strength of local anticlerical groups that, in Livorno in 1885, the council granted the local Società di Cremazione a corner chapel within the main framework of the cemetery of La Cigna (Innesti 2005). Equally, in Turin, the crematorium, which was begun in 1888, was located on a prominent site by the entrance to the city's monumental cemetery (Davies 2005, 27).

In Pavia, the placement of the crematorium was the focus of a protracted debate that lasted between 1883 and 1912 (Zatti 1996, 25-6; De Martini and Negruzzo 2000).

A strong tradition of anticlericalism in Pavia meant that, in 1876, the city's monumental cemetery was built without a chapel in order to preserve its secular nature. In 1883, the local Società di Cremazione charged the architect of the cemetery, Angelo Savoldi, with the design of a crematorium that was to be built in a prominent location within the burial ground; that is, on the eastern side of the main court and opposite the entrance. The clerical authorities responded by asking Savoldi to draw up plans for a chapel for the same site. By 1885, Savoldi had fulfilled both commissions, and both were in a Byzantine-Romanesque style in keeping with the existing arcades (Pavia, Musei Civici, Fondo Savoldi, E 12; the design of the chapel is described in: Zatti 1996, 26; 2000, 258). In 1886, the mayor of Pavia attempted to impose a compromise whereby the contested location on the eastern side of the court would be occupied by an ossuary, and the chapel and crematorium would be built, facing each other, to the north and south – thus, satisfying those who wanted the location facing the entrance 'to be kept neutral, with respect of issues of privilege and priority' (Pavia, Archivio Storico Civico, Seduta del Consiglio Comunale, 4 May 1886, 66-90; '*vorrebbe però che la località centrale avesse a mantenersi neutra, di fronte alla questione di privilegio e di priorità*', Pavia, Archivio Storico Civico, Seduta del Consiglio Comunale, 4 Aug. 1893, 217). However, that solution encountered practical difficulties. Another proposal, advanced in 1886, to build a combined crematorium and ossuary on the eastern site was supressed in 1893 (Pavia, Archivio Storico Civico, Seduta del Consiglio Comunale, 4 Aug. 1893, 216-23). Eventually, in 1901, a crematorium was built in an area to the south of the cemetery that is set back from the main court (Figure 14). In effect, religious interests prevailed and, in 1912, a chapel-cum-ossuary was built on the coveted eastern site – a situation that constituted a betrayal of the secular identity of the cemetery (Pavia, Musei Civici, Fondo Savoldi, E 16a).

Three projects for the crematorium at Pavia, designed by Angelo Savoldi in 1885, 1886, and 1901, reflect a gradual reduction in scale and efforts to suppress meanings associated with cremation. In the first project of 1885, the function of the crematorium was expressed by a dominant chimney, and a cinerarium, or ash chest, was placed at the centre of the façade. Although that centrepiece remained in the reworked design of 1886, the chimney was hidden. The tendency towards concealment was taken a step further in the executed project of 1901 in that the furnace was located in a subterranean chamber – a possibility offered by advancements in technology (Figure 14; Davies 2005, 25). Moreover, as the only component visible above ground, the chimney was decorated as an eclectic neo-Romanesque tower. In fact, the case of Pavia demonstrates how political factors could determine the location and design of crematoria.

Conclusion

Italy was the first country in Europe to revive the practice of cremation on a relatively large scale. Pioneering developments in the field were spurred, in part, by forces associated with liberalism and anticlericalism. As an element in the general struggle for power between the Church and political interests, cremation was seen, by both sides, to express a rejection of religious authority. Thus, Italian crematoria were shaped by factors that stemmed from both supportive and opposing factions. At a more immediate level, the designers of crematoria were faced with choices that reflected two broad tendencies. On one hand, an approach founded in appeasement sought to represent cremation in terms of established meanings and architectural traditions. Although cremation was rooted in liberal and progressive ideas, orthodoxy in terms of aesthetics and the masking effects of traditional architectural styles may have encouraged its adoption among the general public. In contrast, cremation was also underpinned by

more innovative approaches that stemmed from scientific progress and the cultural traditions of the Enlightenment.

Within nineteenth-century Italy, cremation functioned as a flash point in the power struggles between the Church and state, and as an expression of liberalism within a rising middle class. As a major shift in funerary practice, it represented a significant area of conflict, as conservative and Catholic forces fought with liberals and freethinkers for space within Italy's evolving ideological and social structures. In effect, cremation afforded a major platform for the expression of tensions between Church and state; tensions that enveloped Italian cemeteries as emergent political interests sought to use commemoration as a medium of power and influence in the new nation. Whereas those tensions were aggravated by the fact that public cemeteries were largely state-owned but administered by the clergy, they were played out with respect to the architecture and layout of burial grounds, the provision of crematoria, the privileges awarded to Catholics, and restrictions imposed on non-Catholics.

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Notes

1. All translations are by the author.
2. Since at least the fourteenth century, there were non-Catholic burial grounds in Italy, as exemplified by the Jewish cemetery of San Nicolò del Lido in Venice that was established in 1386.
3. Cremation was legalised in Germany in 1879, in Britain in 1884, and in France in 1887.

4. Prominent supporters of cremation included the patriots Giosuè Carducci, Alberto Mario, Tullo Massarani, and Alessandro Gavazzi.
5. The conflict underlying cremation was highlighted by the case of Giuseppe Garibaldi, the leader of the Risorgimento who died in 1882 leaving instructions for his corpse to be burnt on a pyre. However, Garibaldi's corpse was interred by his family with the support of the king and the Vatican, sparking outrage among his supporters (Pini 1885, 28-9; Conti et al. 1998, 227-30).
6. In fact, that prohibition remains in force today 'when it is evident that cremation has been decided upon as a denial of faith, either for propaganda purposes, or out of hatred for the Catholic Church' ("De Cadaverum Crematione", 1963, quoted in Curl 2002, 307).

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Captions

Figure 1. Milan: Monumentale cemetery, crematorium façade, Carlo Maciachini, 1876 (author's photograph, 2009)

Figure 2. Milan: Monumentale cemetery, original design of the crematorium, Carlo Maciachini, 1876 (source: Pini 1885)

Figure 3. Milan: Monumentale cemetery, plan of crematorium, after alterations in 1880-3 (source: Pini 1885)

Figure 4. Milan: Monumentale cemetery, interior of crematorium, altered by Augusto Guidini, 1896 (author's photograph, 2009)

Figure 5. Turin: monumental cemetery, crematorium (Pompeo Marini, 1888) with columbarium (Daniele Donghi, 1898) (source: Pini 1885)

Figure 6. Pisa: suburban cemetery, crematorium, 1883 (author's photograph, 2011)

Figure 7. Brescia: Vantiniano cemetery, crematorium, 1883, demolished 1945 (source: Pini 1885)

Figure 8. Cremona: Monumental cemetery, crematorium, Francesco Podestà, 1880-3 (source: Pini 1885)

Figure 9. Bologna: Certosa cemetery, crematorium, Giuseppe Venini, 1888 (author's photograph, 2012)

Figure 10. Lodi: Riolo cemetery, crematorium, original design (Paolo Gorini, 1877) (source: Pini 1885)

Figure 11. Rome: Verano cemetery, crematorium, Salvatore Rosa, 1883 (source: Pini 1885)

Figure 12. Genoa: Staglieno cemetery, portico adjacent to the crematorium, Giovanni Battista Resasco, 1868 (author's photograph, 2010)

Figure 13. Genoa: Staglieno cemetery, crematorium, Demetrio Paernio, 1903 (author's photograph, 2010)

Figure 14. Pavia: monumental cemetery, crematorium, Angelo Savoldi, 1901 (author's photograph, 2012)