

Reconfiguring Nationalism: The Roll Call of the Fallen Soldiers (1800–2001)

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Abstract

Devastating tragedies, such as the 9/11 terrorist attacks or the massacre during the Polish protests of 1970, are still commemorated with a roll call of the victims' names, which is publicly pronounced. As a matter of civil or political religion, this ritual is studied by political scientists and sociologists and restricted to a specific national context. For the first time, a comparative method of history of religions is applied in order to retrace the transnational diffusion of this nationalist ritual from the Napoleonic era, passing through the fascist European experience, to the present day. The changing of the aesthetic forms in which the ritual took and takes shape, by producing images of the community gathered, outlines an aesthetic realization of 'imagined communities.' This outline will be examined with reference to Benedict Anderson's theory on the origin and spread of nationalism.

Keywords

imagined community – nationalism – war ritualism – roll call – fallen soldiers

1 Introduction: Imagined Community

This paper examines the subject of social aggregation by exploring the reactions to the loss of a community member in modern war contexts. The question involves examining one of the most widespread typologies of the mourning ritual produced by patriotic traditions: the roll call of fallen soldiers or of civil victims, celebrated in Europe and North America from the nineteenth century to today.

The roll call is the calling of the names of the community's dead and the choral response pronounced by the living who unanimously answer, "Here!" It is performed by the nationalist communities confirming the continuity of membership or citizenship (within the fatherland, or political party, or other kind of social group) after death. Scholarship has discussed the roll call with reference to militaristic, patriotic, civil, political, and labor religion, in an extremely wide range of contexts, from democracy to totalitarianism. As we will see, the engaged ritual strategies of gathering the community appear oriented differently according to the social order, so that the 'civil religion' appellation—the concept of this special issue—will be used here in a specific and not a broad sense, corresponding to a particular model of community. As Emilio Gentile wrote, the civil religions, that is of a "collective political entity," do not identify with any particular movement, in opposition to the political religions which have "an exclusive and integralist character."¹ While different social models come to light in the roll call rite—also according to various visual strategies and 'mise-en-scene' (a key-concept of George Mosse's definition of the 'aesthetic of politics')—they all belong to a wide spread nationalist phenomenon to which this essay will therefore pay special attention.²

This research adopts an aesthetic approach to nationalism studies, by applying, moreover, Benedict Anderson's key concept of 'imagined community' which highlights the role played of imagination in the construction of a national identity.³ The study of the roll call celebrations puts us in a position to examine how nationalist communities are gathered by imagining the sacrifice of a member who dies for the commonweal. This type of ritual, which attests a nation imagined in the vision of the death of a member of the same community, in fact outlines an aesthetic insight of a civil or political identity or of some other kind of nationalist identity, as it stages its gathering and shows it publically in the political art and architecture. Special consideration will be accorded to these visual representations.

More specifically, this essay intends to explore, on the one hand, the function of the martyrdom, the revival of the Christian symbolism and its aesthetic

1 Emilio Gentile, "Political Religion: A Concept and its Critics—A Critical Survey," *Totalitarian and Political Religions* 6/1 (2005), 19–32, at 30.

2 For the concept of the 'aesthetic of politics,' see George L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars Through the Third Reich* (New York: H. Fertig, 1975).

3 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London & New York: Verso, 2006 [1st ed.1983, revised ed. 1991]). Anderson died in December 2015. My essay is intended as a homage to his work.

of death in civil/political religion, from which arises the possibility to imagine and 'see' the nation, and, on the other hand, the persistence of this imaginary victimological response as well as its change, i.e., the capacity of adaptation of nationalism to social changes over the past two centuries.

In my work, I support the prevailing interpretations of the roll call mourning as a worship of the social 'permanence' or 'sameness,' given that for any dead member called the community can always answer itself. Nevertheless, I contest the narrow approach adopted. Although the ritual has been extensively examined from different points of view (political, sociological, religious), it has always been analyzed within a specific national context (the French, American, or Polish roll call, etc.) and in a delimited political context (frequently the fascist European area or specifically Italian Fascism). The originality of my research lies in its comparative method. My aim is to verify, for the first time, the extent and the variability of the phenomenon and its national manifestations according to its transnational diffusion.

A comparative approach will therefore be adopted in order to observe recurring elements across different countries and epochs, by bringing into focus similarities and permanent traits among various cases in modern and contemporary history and by identifying the origin of the ritual and its spread from one society to another. Different points of propagation of this nationalist ritual should be distinguished, corresponding to different images of gathered communities, determined by performing the roll call of the dead members and ritualizing the 'myth of the lost community.'⁴ In this way the funerary ritual's development—in Napoleonic ritualism, fascist and socialist religiosity, and post-Vietnam American patriotism—will be described from the early nineteenth century to today, along with the changes to the nationalist imagery.

The proceeding paragraphs will go through the history of the nationalist ritual in order to set up a periodization of the changes undergone by its social imagery (patriotic, political, laborer, individual) in correspondence to visual art reconfiguration.

2 The Fatherland and Nationalism

The point of origin and the first propagation of the roll call can be located in the Napoleonic era's military ritualism. Among the Napoleonic cases of

4 Regarding the expression 'myth of the lost community' see Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), French original edition 1986.

invocation of ‘those who died for their country’ (*morts pour la patrie*) one of the most relevant is the *appel* (roll call) of Théophile-Malo Corret de La Tour d’Auvergne, First Grenadier of France, who died in action in 1800. The ritual call of the fallen soldier was used by the regiment to which he belonged, with the response, “*Présent!* [Present!],” or, in other sources, “*morts au champ d’honneur* [dead on the field of honor].”⁵ This case-study is well-known. The novelty of my study lies in locating a prototype and in giving historical coordinates to the study of the forms of the roll call which followed, i.e., the further fascist, socialist, individual models within the wide-spread and long-run diffusion of nationalist symbols.

An iconographic analysis of the Napoleonic prototype may begin with the painting of the death of the abovementioned La Tour d’Auvergne by Georges Moreau de Tours (*La Tour d’Auvergne: Premier Grenadier de France, mort au champ d’honneur*, 1880, Musée Quimper (Figure 1]). The visual context of the symbolic posture of the arm hanging down, which characterized this painting, can be recovered by looking at the aesthetic models of the French revolution’s ‘Martyrs of Liberty.’ The figure of La Tour seems to take shape from the victimological style promoted by the official painter of the National Convention, Jacques Louis David, who encoded the Christian motif of the Michelangelo’s *Pietà* (1498–1499, St. Peter’s Basilica, Rome) in *Les derniers moments de Michel Lepeletier* (1793, lost; see Figure 2) and the *Marat assassiné* (1793, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium).⁶

5 Charles-Nicolas Beauvais, *Victoires, conquêtes, désastres, revers et guerres civiles des Français, de 1792 à 1815* (Paris: Impr. C.-L.-F. Panckoucke, 1819), vol. 13, 117; Jean Baptiste Pierre Jullien de Courcelles (ed.), *Dictionnaire historique et biographique des généraux français* (Paris: Arthus Bertrand & Treuttel Wurtz, 1821), vol. 13, 465; Pauline Annenkoff, “Souvenirs de Madame Annenkoff,” *La nouvelle revue* 12/66 (1890), 706–731, at 707; K., “Le cœur de La Tour d’Auvergne et le drapeau du 46° de ligne,” *L’intermédiaire des chercheurs et curieux* 28/636 (1893), 538–540, at 540; Alphonse Rabbe & Claude Augustin Vieilh de Boisjolin (eds.), *Biographie universelle et portative des contemporains* (Paris: Bureau de la Biographie, 1826), 175; Elgéar Blaze, *La vie militaire sous l’Empire* (Bruxelles: Société Typographique Belge, 1837), vol. 1, 86; A. Amyot, “Rapport de M. Amyot,” *Bulletin de la Société pour l’instruction élémentaire* 13/152 (1841), 294–296, at 296; Alphonse Buhot De Kersers, *Histoire de Théophile-Malo La Tour d’Auvergne (Corret): Premier Grenadier de France* (Paris: Paulin, 1841), 236 and 347; G.V., “Le cœur de La Tour d’Auvergne,” *L’intermédiaire des chercheurs et curieux* 28/629 (1893), 243–244.

6 Michel Régis (ed.), *David Contre David: Actes Du Colloque Organisé Au Musée Du Louvre—Décembre 1989* (Paris: Documentation française, 1993); Carlo Ginzburg, *Paura reverenza terrore* (Adelphi: Milano, 2015), 81–114.



FIGURE 1 La Tour d'Auvergne, premier grenadier de France, mort au champ d'honneur, by Georges Moreau De Tours, 1880. Fonds National d'Art Contemporain, inv. 524; property transfer to the city of Quimper in 2013. REPRODUCED WITH COURTESY OF THE MUSÉE DES BEAUX-ARTS DE QUIMPER.



FIGURE 2 Les derniers moments de Michel Lepeletier, by Jacques Louis David, 1793—engraving of Anatole Desvoge. Charles Saunier, Louis David: Biographie critique (Paris: H. Laurens, 1903), 53.

La Tour d'Auvergne's veneration was also part of the devotion to the Sacred Heart revival in the European civil religions, here brought into patriotic-military forms.⁷ According to a Napoleonic decree promulgated in 1803, his heart was preserved, embalmed in a box, and carried "*ostensiblement* [ostensibly]" by the *fourrier* ("quartermaster") of his grenadier brigade's company.⁸ During every muster, his name was recalled in the military roll call while the heart was raised by a sergeant major, analogous to the Eucharistic Elevation.⁹ Other sources attest that the box was suspended in the air by being attached to the flagpole.¹⁰ The nineteenth-century French tradition of carrying the heart of La Tour d'Auvergne during the military marches is—in my point of view—a reference to the *Corpus Domini* procession. Such elements, along with others, like the symbolism of the heart of La Tour pierced by a lance, recall the Christological imagery, as do their ensuing variations.¹¹

The Napoleonic Christological prototype of the roll call spread across Europe, and was particularly prevalent in France where this tradition has endured the most.¹² Since the American Civil War it has also been established in the United States, where the roll call is answered with "s/he died for his/her country."¹³ In the aftermath of the Great War, local French communities gathered by pronouncing the roll call of the fallen soldiers in the central squares of each town. They actively contributed to the production of images of the

7 Daniele Menozzi, *Sacro cuore: Un culto tra devozione interiore e restaurazione cristiana della società* (Roma: Viella, 2001). For a pertinent approach to the political French revolutionary interpretations of Jesus, see idem, *Letture politiche di Gesù: Dall'Ancien Régime alla Rivoluzione* (Brescia: Paideia Editrice, 1979), 195–216.

8 I.e., Arrêté 6913 – Gand, 26 messidor an XI (15 juillet 1803). See Lewis Goldsmith (ed.), *Correspondance de Napoléon 1^{er} publiée par ordre de l'Empereur Napoléon III* (Paris: H. Plon & J. Dumaine, 1861), vol. 8, 402.

9 Annenkoff, "Souvenirs," 707. The heart of La Tour d'Auvergne was finally transferred to the Museum-temple of the French Army, *Les Invalides* in its collection of embalmed hearts of patriots: Anon., "Une cérémonie patriotique," *Le petit journal: Supplément du dimanche* 15/699 (1904), 114.

10 G. V., "Le cœur," 243; Allan Cunningham, *Anecdotes of Napoleon Bonaparte and His Times, Compiled from Every Authentic Source* (London: Charles Daly, 1839), 158–159.

11 Blaze, *La vie*, 86; Beauvais, *Victoires*, 117.

12 Antoine Prost, "Les monuments aux morts: Culte républicain? Culte civique? Culte patriotique?," in: Pierre Nora (ed.), *La République*, vol. 1 of *Les lieux de mémoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), 195–229; Daniel J. Sherman, *The Construction of Memory in Interwar France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 287.

13 Aurora Hunt, *The Army of the Pacific: 1860–1866* (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2004 [1951]), 92; Arthur A. Wright, *The Civil War in the Southwest* (Denver: Big Mountain Press, 1964), 99.



FIGURE 3 *Unveiling of the Municipality's Monument to the First World War Dead, Portieux (Vosges [France]), 21 August 1921—The roll call of the dead. Post card, private collection.*

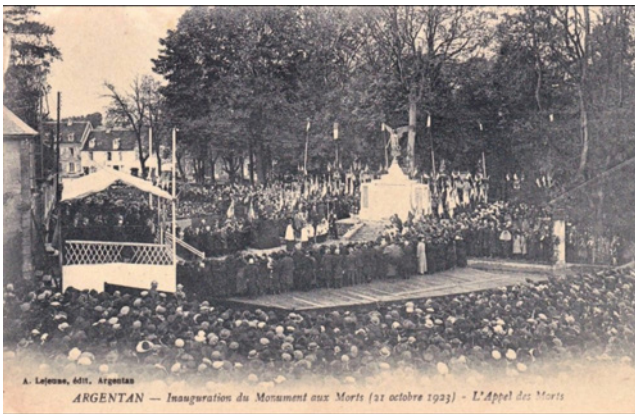


FIGURE 4 *Unveiling of the Monument to the Dead, Argentan (Orne, [France]), 21 October 1923—The roll call of the dead. Post card, private collection.*

musters (see, e.g., the post cards: featured in Figure 3 and Figure 4) in which the nation was seen as gathered at a metaphorical level.

In all these particular cases—from the Napoleonic era through the First World War—the ritual manifested itself as a civil liturgy of the fatherland's religion. Nevertheless, different points of propagation of this secular ritual

should be distinguished, in correspondence to different nationalist models of social aggregation ritually determined by the performing of the roll call.

3 Fascism and Transnationalism: The Stone Aesthetic

A second point of diffusion of the ritual, which functioned to spread a new liturgical prototype of the roll call through Europe during the interbellum period, was Italian Fascism. The fascist roll call reproduced the same formula and similar performances as the patriotic rite. Nevertheless, the political mourning “*appello del caduto*” (“roll call of the fallen”), with the response “*presente!* [present!],” performed by the fascist Italian armed squads, no longer celebrated the communion within the fatherland, but within a political party.¹⁴ The roll call was adapted to a new kind of community (the *Fasci* of combat and the National Fascist Party) to which members belonged not by right of birth (ethnically, just as compatriots of the same fatherland), but by joining it voluntarily through a conversion/enrollment process and taking an oath of allegiance.

My methodology implies a study not only of the civil and the political liturgy but also of its reflection in architecture and sacred art. The aesthetic of the roll call rite, developed within a particular fascist style, is actually illustrated, for instance, in the Black Shirts’ martyrs worship room (*sacrario dei martiri*) at the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution (*Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista*) held in Rome in 1932, which involved a visual language of politics. At the center of the room stood a monumental metallic cross surrounded by inscriptions of the word ‘*presente*,’ repeated all along the circular wall (see Figure 5).¹⁵ The word ‘present/here’ was recalled as it was in the *appello del caduto* ritual recalling

14 Arturo Marpicati, “Martire: Martiri fascisti,” in: Giovanni Gentile (ed.), *Enciclopedia Italiana di scienze, lettere ed arti* (Roma: Istituto dell’Enciclopedia Italiana, 1934), vol. 22, 456–460, at 460; PNF (ed.), *Dizionario di Politica*, (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1940), vol. 1, 146–147, s.v. “Appello Fascista.”

15 Dino Alfieri & Luigi Freddi (eds.), *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista: 1° decennale della Marcia su Roma / guida storica* (Roma: PNF, 1933), 228–229; Libero Andreotti, “The Aesthetics of War: The Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 45/2 (1992), 76–86; Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 110–117; Jeffrey T. Schnapp (ed.), *Anno X: La Mostra della Rivoluzione fascista del 1932* (Pisa & Roma: Istituti Editoriali e Poligrafici Internazionali, 2003), 41–49. Design by Adalberto Libera and Antonio Valente.

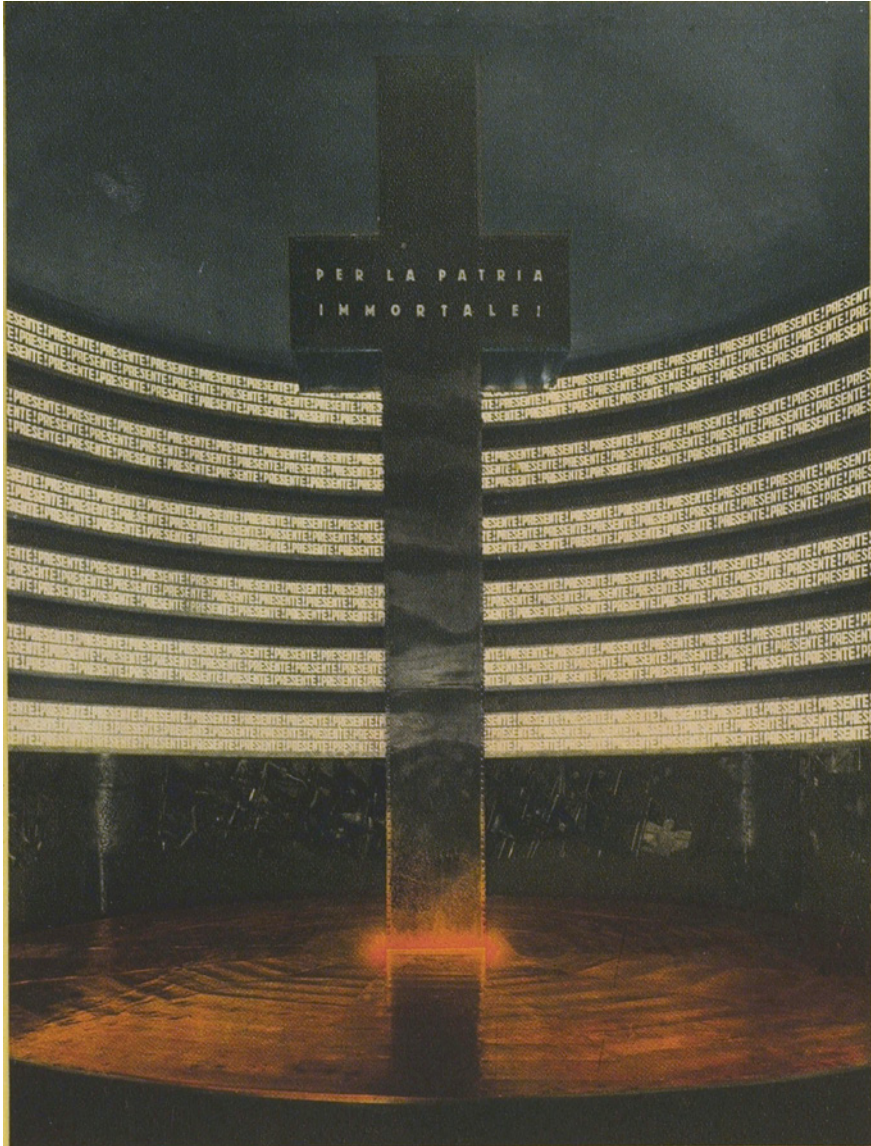


FIGURE 5 Sacrario dei martiri: Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista, by Adalberto Libera and Antonio Valente, Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Roma, 1932—*Exposition of the Fascist Revolution, room U, the shrine of the martyrs*. Dino Alfieri & Luigi Freddi, *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista: 1° decennale della Marcia su Roma / guida storica (Rome: Partito Nazionale Fascista, 1933)*, 229.

the presence of the fallen. The historian of the fascist ‘sacralization of politics,’ Emilio Gentile, noticed the ‘visual transposition’ of the roll call.¹⁶

Similarly, the Italian World War I Redipuglia memorial (see Figure 6 and Figure 7), built in 1938, made the roll call word *‘presente’* the leitmotiv of the cemetery architecture by displaying the same repetition, along with the names of the fallen soldiers inscribed in the stone of the burial niches. Christian religious codes are embodied in the architectural structure, which consists of a monumental open-air stairway and represents a symbolical ascension to the three crosses raised at the summit to evoke the Calvary.¹⁷ A third example of political sanctuary based on the roll call fascist design is the Sacrarium of Santa Croce in Florence (*Sacrario dei caduti per la Rivoluzione fascista* [“Shrine of the fallen for the Fascist Revolution”], 1934) characterized by the *‘presente’* word-graphic replicated and engraved on the wall of the hallway of the Black Shirts’ tombs (see Figure 8 and Figure 9).¹⁸

The tribute-visit of Adolf Hitler in 1938 to the Santa Croce Fascist *Sacrario* is symptomatic of the common transnational religiosity of Fascism.¹⁹ Within the same fascist European phenomenon, the Nazi roll call was celebrated in similar political shrines. The *Feldherrnhalle* loggia in Munich, adapted in 1935 for the political entombment ceremony of the putschists of the failed 1923 coup d’état, played a fundamental role in shaping the image of the gathering of the Nazi community by a ritual calling of their ‘martyrs.’ In order to implement

16 Gentile, *The Sacralization*, 116; Roberta Suzzi Valli, “Il culto dei martiri fascisti,” in: Oliver Janz & Lutz Klinkhammer (eds.), *La morte per la Patria: La celebrazione dei caduti dal Risorgimento alla Repubblica* (Roma: Donzelli, 2008), 101–117, at 115.

17 Anna Maria Fiore, “La monumentalizzazione dei luoghi di teatro della Grande Guerra: Il sacrario di Redipuglia di Giovanni Greppi e Giannino Castiglioni,” *Annali di Architettura* 15 (2003), 233–248.

18 Roberta Suzzi Valli, “The Myth of Squadristo in the Fascist Regime,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 35/2 (2000), 131–150, at 144–146; Alessandra Staderini, “La ‘Marcia dei Martiri’: La traslazione nella cripta di Santa Croce dei caduti fascisti,” *Annali di Storia di Firenze* 3 (2008), 195–214, at 203–208. Architect Alfredo Lensi.

19 Senato della Repubblica / Cinecittà Luce, *Hitler passa davanti alle tombe dei martiri fascisti*. <http://senato.archivioluca.it/senato-luce/scheda/foto/IL0000035057/12/Hitler-passa-davanti-alle-tombe-dei-martiri-fascisti-lo-seguono-Ribbentrop-Mussolini-Goebbels-camicie-nere-fanno-la-guardia-si-legge-liscrizione-sulla-tomba-di-Enrico-Pez.html> (accessed 1 December 2015); and Senato della Repubblica / Cinecittà Luce, *Hitler rende omaggio al Sacrario dei Caduti Fascisti*. <http://senato.archivioluca.it/senato-luce/scheda/foto/IL0000035056/12/Hitler-rende-omaggio-al-Sacrario-dei-Caduti-Fascisti-il-Fuhrer-ed-il-Duce-coperto-salutano-romanamente.html?start=12> (accessed 1 December 2015).

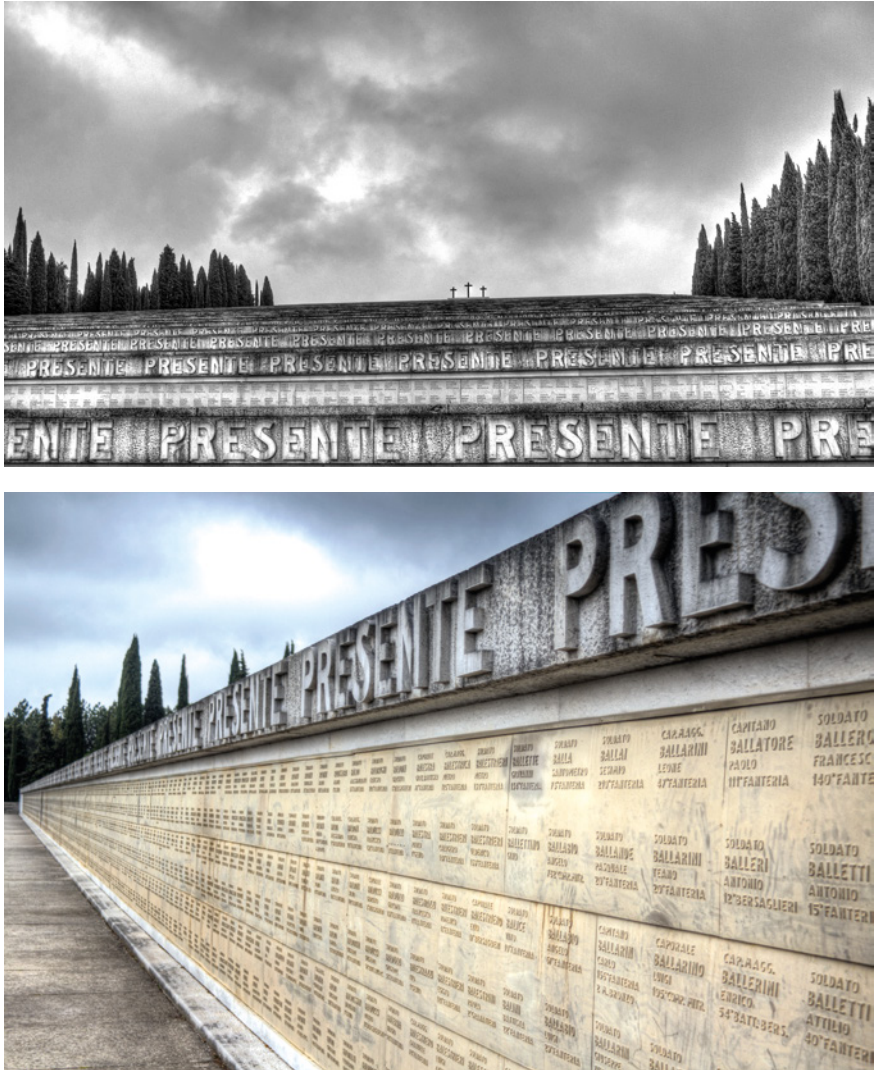


FIGURE 6-7 Sacrario militare di Redipuglia, by Giovanni Greppi and Giannino Castiglioni, Italy, 1938—military shrine of Redipuglia.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF FRANCO ZAMENGO.

a mass-media strategy, the inscriptions of their names in golden letters, underneath the words “*zum appell* [line up for the roll all]” (1938 ceremony) and “*der letzte appell* [the final roll call]” (1935 ceremony), were displayed on the funeral pylons, while the Hitler Youth responded “*hier* [here]!” The day after the political burial, the coffins were placed in the new *Ehrentempel* neoclassical



FIGURE 8 Sacrario dei caduti per la Rivoluzione fascista, by *Alfredo Lensi*, *Catholic Basilica of Santa Croce, Florence, Italy, 1934*—*The fascist Sacrarium's Nave. Sante Lungherini, "Lapoteosi dei Caduti per la Rivoluzione in Santa Croce," Firenze: Rassegna mensile del Comune 3/10-11 (1934), 290-292, at 290.*

open-air structures (see Figure 10 and Figure 11; architect Paul Ludwig Troost, demolished in 1947 due to the denazification program). The pylons of the first *Feldherrnhalle* ceremony, beneath which the coffins were located, as well as the *Ehrentempel's* pillars, which enclosed the sarcophagus bearing the names of the fallen, are both, with their iconic significance, components of Nazi monumentalization of the roll call and reflect the idea of an unswerving and structural order of the political gathering.²⁰

20 Simon Taylor, "Symbol and Ritual under National Socialism," *The British Journal of Sociology* 32/4 (1981), 504-520, at 506-511; Jay W. Baird, *To Die for Germany: Heroes in the Nazi Pantheon* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 41-72; Sabine Behrenbeck, *Der Kult Um Die Toten Helden: Nationalsozialistische Mythen, Riten Und Symbole 1923 Bis 1945* (Vierow: SH-Verlag, 1996), 278 and 327; Sven Reichardt, *Faschistische Kampfbünde: Gewalt Und Gemeinschaft Im Italienischen Squadrismus Und in Der Deutschen SA* (Köln: Böhlau, 2002), 546-547; Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual: Exploring Forms of Political Theatre* (London: Routledge, 2005), 147-149. An extended photographic collection of the *Feldherrnhalle|Ehrentempel* ceremony on 8-9 November 1935 in Munich is available in



FIGURE 9 L'imponente aspetto di piazza Santa Croce durante l'austero e solenne rito del XXVII ottobre, *picture by Foto Luce, Catholic Basilica of Santa Croce, Florence, Italy, 27 October 1934—The fascist gathering in Plaza Santa Croce (Florence) during the roll call rite. At the left, the banners with the inscription “presente [present]” underneath the names of the dead Black Shirts. Lungherini, “Lapoteosi,” n.p. (attached).*

The Italian fascist *appello del caduto* seems to be reproduced, mostly in the 1930s, in the Nazi *letzte appell* (“final roll call”) with the response “*hier!*,” as well as in the Spanish fascist Phalanx’s rite for the *caídos por Dios y por la patria* (“those who died for God and their country”) with the response “*¡presente!*” and in the *apelul morților* (“roll call of the dead”) in Romania by the Fascist Legion of Archangel Michael with the response “*prezent!*,” in addition to other examples in fascist movements in Europe.²¹ The fascist roll call represented a transnational political liturgy.

the Heinrich Hoffmann archive. See Bayerische Staatsbibliothek. <https://bildarchiv.bsb-muenchen.de/>; <http://www.bpk-images.de/> (accessed 15 February 2016). It is also available in the Hugo Jaeger archive (now part of the LIFE magazine picture collection).

21 For the example in the Spanish context, see Berrojo L. Castro, *Héroes y Caídos: Políticas de la memoria en la España contemporánea* (Madrid: Catarata, 2008), 87; Zira Box & Ismael Saz, “Spanish Fascism as a Political Religion (1931–1941),” *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 12/4



FIGURES 10–11 *Untitled*, by Heinrich Hoffmann, Munich, Königsplatz (Germany), 8–9 November 1936 and November 1938, respectively—Nazi musters. In the background, the two Ehrentempel's structures housing the sarcophagus of the dead putschists. Heinrich Hoffmann archive (K.116 – hoff-14387 and M.148 – hoff-22193)

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There is an incorrect ideological tendency—predominantly in Italy—to consider the roll call to be representative of the fascist political-religious symbolism.²² As a matter of fact, the ritual originated from no one source, but rather different points of propagation (fascist Italy, but also Napoleonic France, etc.) and gave birth to different traditions that ran parallel. For example, independent and different from the fascist outcomes, but contemporaneous, the ritual was also performed in Poland within the new Independent Polish State, re-founded after World War I. In the 1930s, in the Józef Piłsudski era, the *apel poległych* (“roll call of the fallen”) was predominantly announced, with the answer “*jest wśród nas* [he is among us].”²³ During World War II, it was performed by the US Army with the answer “here!,” for instance, in the commemoration of the victims of the Battle of Corregidor in 1942 in the aftermath of the attack on Pearl Harbor.²⁴

4 Relics of the Past and Mutations in the Post-World War II Era: The Aesthetic of Reflection

After the fall of Fascism the two traditions of the roll call rite—civil (patriotic)/ political (transnationalist)—survived one beside the other and still produced two different kinds of imagery of a gathered community: one, the fatherland that coincides with the national territory and corresponds ethnically to its traditions and, two, the party that can incorporate the fatherland but differs from it as a revolutionary component, which stays within the nation and crosses its boundaries. The two types of roll call of remembrance spread through separate channels. On the one hand, a roll call which continues the civil American

(2011), 371–389, at 377. For the example in the Romanian context, see Valentin Săndulescu, “Sacralised Politics in Action: The February 1937 Burial of the Romanian Legionary Leaders Ion Moța and Vasile Marin,” *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8/2 (2007), 259–269, at 265–266.

22 Marpicati, “Martire,” 460: “*l'appello dei caduti* [...] *rito nato dal martirologio fascista* [the roll call [...] origins from the fascist martyrdom].”

23 Klemens Kurzyp, *Apel poległych* (Stężyca: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Stężycy, 1995), 7–12; Wiesław Jan Wysocki, “Wprowadzenie,” in: Jerzy Tomczyk & Tadeusz Krząstek (eds.), *Stanie do apelu* (Warszawa: DWiPO, 2004), 5–6, at 5.

24 Henry C. Dethloff, *Texas A & M University: A Pictorial History, 1876–1996* (College Station: Texas A & M University, 1996), 130. Also regarding the poetry of John Ashton *Heroes' Roll Call*, see John A. Adams, *Softly Call the Muster: The Evolution of a Texas Aggie Tradition* (College Station: Texas A&M University, 1994), 33 and 63–64. A roll call is pronounced every year in the Texas A&M University, for the Texas Aggies commemoration, where an annual tradition of musters was born in 1922.

tradition—as was followed during the Second World War—is still read by the United States Army for the American soldiers fallen in Iraq and Afghanistan.²⁵ On the other hand, a roll call of the dead with a political and not civil imagery of community, apparently similar but essentially different, is still performed today in the neo-fascist environments of Europe.

From the second half of the twentieth century on, these kinds of roll call, both North American and neo-fascist, have survived largely unchanged, but others have evolved and adapted to geopolitical changes, i.e., to the collapse of communism in Europe in the 1980s. Within the Polish movement led by *Solidarność*, a roll call was announced in order to commemorate the shipyard workers who fell during the 1970 protests in Gdańsk. While calling their names and answering with the Polish patriotic formula “*jest wśród nas* [he is among us],” the independent, self-governing labor union *Solidarność* evoked a new imagery of social aggregation, not corresponding to the communist organization, not simply nationalist and not effectively political, but based on the solidarity between workers. The *Solidarność* memorial for the victims, also known as the *Pomnik Trzech Krzyży* (“Three Cross Monument”), was unveiled in 1980 (see Figure 12), reproducing a Christian symbol—the monumental ship



FIGURE 12 Pomnik Poległych Stoczniowców 1970, by Wiesław Szyślak, Bogdan Pietruszka, Elżbieta Szczodrowska-Peplińska, and Robert Pepliński, Gdańsk, Poland, 16 December 1980—The unveiling of the monument to the fallen shipyard.
PHOTO COURTESY OF TOMASZ WIERZEJSKI ©FOTONOVA.

25 USA Senate, “Honoring our Armed Forces,” *Congressional Record: Proceedings and Debates*, 108th Congress, Second Session (20 September 2004), vol. 150, Part 14, 18672; Christina Dion, “108th Training Command Honors Fallen Warriors with Memorial Dedication, Monument,” *The Griffon: Published in the Interest of the 108th Training Command* 33/3 (2009), 8–11, at 8–9.



FIGURE 13
 Pomnik Poległych Stoczniovców 1970,
 Gdańsk, Poland, 18 August 2013—*Monument
 to the fallen shipyard workers of 1970.*
 PHOTO COURTESY OF TOMEK KARZAR-
 NOWICZ ©EYESOFTHENORTH.

anchors are crucified (see Figure 13)—which commonly recurs in the history of the roll call rite.²⁶

Besides the fall of the Soviet Union, the roll call of the dead community's members also resurfaced in the context of so-called 'Islamic terrorism.' These two selected cases illustrate the persistence and the new meaning of the ritual in contemporary history.

A roll call is performed in the United States to commemorate the names of the victims of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Every year these names are called during a national ceremony held at the site of the former World Trade Center.²⁷ The names announced are inscribed on the bronze parapets surrounding the pools' waterfalls of the *Reflecting Absence* memorial (completed in 2011;

26 For a description of the ceremony at the unveiling of the monument, see Jan Kubik, *The Power of Symbols Against the Symbols of Power: The Rise of Solidarity and the Fall of State Socialism in Poland* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 205. Architects Bogdan Pietruszka, Wiesław Szyślak, Wojciech Mokwiński i Jacek Krenz. An extended and relevant documentation of the ceremony on 16 December 1980 is available at the European Solidarity Centre of Gdańsk (*Europejskie Centrum Solidarności*), i.e., photographs by Andrzej Tanewski and Zenon Mirola.

27 Victor J. Seidler, *Remembering 9/11: Terror, Trauma and Social Theory* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), x.



FIGURE 14 Bird's Eye View, New York City, 22 December 2011—Reflecting Absence memorial from above.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CORINNE RHODE.

architect Michael Arad), which was built within the area where the Twin Towers stood (see Figure 14 and Figure 15).²⁸

The *Reflecting Absence* monument, along with the Vietnam Veterans Wall memorial adjacent to the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument (completed in 1982; architect Maya Lin; see Figure 16), constitute two architectural expressions of a new nationalist imagery.²⁹ In either case there are no

28 James E. Young, "The Stages of Memory at Ground Zero," in: Oren B. Stier & J. Shawn Landres (eds.), *Religion, Violence, Memory, and Place* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 214–234; idem, "Memory and the Monument after 9/11," in: Richard Crownshaw, Jane Kilby, & Antony Rowland (eds.), *The Future of Memory* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 77–92. In 2003, Young was appointed to the jury for the World Trade Center Site Memorial competition. See also Marita Sturken, "The Aesthetics of Absence: Rebuilding Ground Zero," *American Ethnologist* 31/3 (2004), 311–325. On the topic of the 'unrepresentable,' see Thomas Stubblefield, *9/11 and the Visual Culture of Disaster* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 152–179.

29 Maya Lin's influence on the *Reflecting Absence* memorial is palpable. As a member of the jury she strongly supported Michael Arad's project. See Paul Goldberger, *Up from Zero: Politics, Architecture, and the Rebuilding of New York* (New York: Random House, 2004), 226–227; Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 143.



FIGURE 15 World Trade Center 9/11 Memorial, 16 September 2012.
PHOTO COURTESY OF SEBASTIAN IANZZANO.



FIGURE 16 Offerings at the Wall, Washington DC, US, 25 May 2014—Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The view includes the collection of medals, insignia, MIA bracelets, bullet casings, photographs, letters, flowers, and flags from coffins that survivors have left at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.
PHOTO COURTESY OF D. SCOTT MCLEOD.



FIGURE 17 Remembering, 10 December 2007—the touching of the names inscribed in the reflecting wall of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

PHOTO COURTESY OF EDWARD H. PIEN, M.D.

patriotic inscriptions, but only the names of the fallen engraved on the liturgical walls and the parapets—to be touched and to be honored “in private not public grief.”³⁰ This suggestion of the cultural historian Mosse, with reference to Lin’s architecture of remembrance, is important for outlining an evolution of the civil roll call rite which, from the post-Vietnam era on, appears individually oriented. The community is imagined as gathered not by together calling aloud a dead member, but by touching the etched inscription of his name, as the single members do alone in silence (see Figure 17 and Figure 19). Alongside or in place of patriotic symbols, the biographical stories of the victims read during the 9/11 musters, the reading of their names by relatives, the museum collection of personal belongings, and the ‘Wall of Faces’ of the Memorial Exhibition at the National September 11th Memorial Museum, reveal individual elements of a new North American nationalism.³¹

30 George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 224.

31 Michael Bloomberg et al., *The Stories They Tell: Artifacts from the National September 11 Memorial Museum* (New York: Skira Rizzoli Publications, 2013); 9/11 Memorial & Museum. <https://www.911memorial.org> (accessed 5 December 2015).

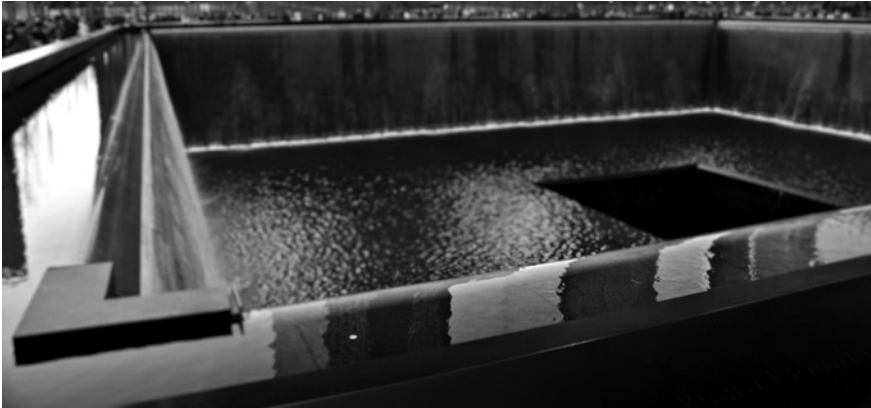


FIGURE 18 Reflecting Absence memorial, New York City, 6 April 2012—reflections in one of the water fountains marking the footprints of the fallen Twin Towers.
PHOTO COURTESY OF PHIL BOUCHER.

The black granite reflective surface of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, in which the names of the servicemen killed or missing in action are inscribed, mirrors back the image—among their names—of the community members standing next to it (see Figure 17). It has been called the “honest reflection” (“no matter how you looked at it, you always saw yourself reflected back”).³² In light of this aesthetic of reflection in civil American religion, we can argue that the community is no longer imagined. A real image is now shown which is impossible to shape, no longer evoking an imagined form: “no image is permanent on the Wall.”³³ What emerges, as a turning point, is an unimaginable community, and thus the nationalist process defined by Anderson is here inclined to be interrupted. The reflective surface of the 9/11 memorial’s pools constitutes another example of the United States’ new roll call architectural aesthetic. The bronze parapets, listing the etched names of the dead, enclose a reflective water surface which mirrors back a fluid image, around which the community is gathered by touching the engraved names (see Figure 18). The instability of the reflection is emphasized in so far as the image takes shape, all along the perimeter of the fallen towers, in the water at the edge of waterfalls.

32 Jan C. Scruggs, *To Heal a Nation: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1992 [1985]), 154. This work is a memoir of a Vietnam veteran. See also Lisa M. Capps, “The Memorial as Symbol and Agent of Healing,” in: Walter H. Capps (ed.), *The Vietnam Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 272–289, at 279.

33 Cara Sutherland, “Preface,” in: Larry Powell, *Hunger of the Heart: Communion at the Wall* (Dubuque: Islewest Pub., 1995), ix–xi, at x.



FIGURE 19 Reflecting Absence memorial, New York City, 24 December 2011—detail of the touching of the etched names of the dead in the bronze parapets.
PHOTO COURTESY OF TANJA HÖFLIGER.

5 Conclusion: An Ariadne's Thread

Anderson defined the nation as an 'imagined community': "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."³⁴ The roll call rite, as a communion of the community with the members who can no longer be met nor heard, confirms the role of images in

34 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6. The modern forms of war dead worship constitute, for Anderson, a starting point for the understanding of the role played by imagination in creating national communities. Moreover, the various memorials known as The Tombs of Unknown Soldiers were, for him, an emblem of this social imagination, which was testified by the exclusion of an identifiable dead in the ritual process of nationalist identification. In my essay, I consider the roll call rite as a further example in this sense, besides that of The Tombs of the Unknown Soldiers.

the process through which a nation is seen as gathered. The question of the visibility of the nation in the roll call of the dead is a relevant aspect of the imagery's processes of nationalism.

This essay on the nationalist roll call of the dead members points out the variations of images of a community in correspondence with the development and the crisis of the nation-state system. The ritual attests a post-national imagination in transnational, geopolitical, and individual new landscapes. The community is imagined as gathered in terms of the fatherland (starting from the Napoleonic ritualism, passing through the two World Wars, and still present in the contemporary American War imagery), of a political party (in the fascist religiosity and neo-fascist movements), of a trade union (in the Polish labor ritualism of the 1980s), and within an individual-centered victimology that rose in the post-Vietnam USA. The visual patterns change while the nationalist ritual tool of the roll call continues to be used and constantly adapted. Comparative studies on the roll call give an opportunity to highlight a complex phenomenon of the reconfiguration of the nationalism that originates from la Tour d'Auvergne's death in 1800 and leads to the 9/11 terrorism act. In this framework, the roll call should be considered as an Ariadne's thread in the history of nationalisms, as it attests to the on-going process of aesthetical figuration of a nation in the post-national age.

By referring to the sociological concept of imagination, the aesthetic perspective helps us to situate the figurative nationalist style of communication—which formalizes an inter-dependence of politics and art—as a religious issue and takes systematically into account a visual, as well as a body, ritual language (the bodies gathering, the collective gestures, postures and interactions, the coral voices). This essay outlines the aesthetic realization of the imagined community and—by following the roll call ritual variations—detects the changes in social (civil, political, labor, individual) strategies related to an imaginative process, which is the aesthetical remaking of nationalism today.

Another conclusion can be deduced from the recurring Christian elements which have come to light in the nationalist roll call, pointing out a secularized theological aesthetic.³⁵ The imaginative process of nationalism should be critically oriented with regard to political theology.

35 Regarding the expression "secularized theological concept," see Carl Schmitt, *Political theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985 [1st ed. 1923; 2nd ed. 1934]), 36.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Anne Koch for her invaluable advice and for inviting me to contribute to JRE's special issue on *The Aesthetics of Civil Religion*. I would also like to take this opportunity to give thanks to the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek of Munich (Germany) and especially to Angelika Betz for her help with the Hoffmann archive; to the Europejskie Centrum Solidarności of Gdańsk (Poland) and principally to Iwona Kwiatkowska (senior specialist for archival resources) for her kind collaboration; as well as to Catherine Le Guen of the Musée des beaux-arts of Quimper (France). Special gratitude goes out to all the photographers who contributed to this essay (Phil Boucher, Tanja Höfliger, Sebastian Ianzano, Tomek Karzarnowicz, D. Scott McLeod, Edward H. Pien, Corinne Rhode, Tomasz Wierzejski, and Franco Zamengo) and to JRE's editorial assistant Laura Vollmer, whose precious competence deserves special mention.

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