

eScholarship

California Italian Studies

Title

Giuditta Tavani Arquati and Anti-Catholic Motherhood in the Fight for Rome, 1867–95

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/69m9m019>

Journal

California Italian Studies, 13(1)

Author

Moore, Diana

Publication Date

2024-11-03

DOI

10.5070/C313162027

Copyright Information

Copyright 2024 by the author(s). This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

Peer reviewed

Giuditta Tavani Arquati and Anti-Catholic Motherhood in the Fight for Rome, 1867–95

Diana Moore

In October 1867, Giuseppe Garibaldi and his volunteer army invaded the Papal States in a revolutionary attempt to seize control of Rome for the Kingdom of Italy. As his forces slowly approached the Eternal City, a small group of patriots began to stockpile weapons in the Trastevere home and wool factory of Giulio Ajani in preparation for a simultaneous uprising. Unfortunately for the patriots, a local police inspector noticed their activities and alerted his superiors.¹ A large contingent of papal forces then descended on the Ajani home and defeated the outnumbered revolutionaries in a violent battle on October 25, 1867.² All the victims of this day soon entered the ranks of nationalist martyrs, though none was more celebrated than the lone woman among them, Giuditta Tavani Arquati (1830–67).

Tavani Arquati was the daughter of Giustino Tavani, another patriot who operated a wool mill in Trastevere, and Adelaide Mambor. At age fourteen, she married Francesco Arquati (1810–67), whom she knew through her father's business and who shared her devotion to the nation. The couple fought for the Roman Republic in 1849 and went into exile following its collapse before returning to Rome where they lived with their nine children. On that fateful day in October 1867, papal forces killed both Tavani Arquati and her husband, as well as their young son Antonio.³ Many reports further claimed that she was pregnant at the time of her death. This tragic tale of resistance and loss intrigued audiences and, throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century, powerfully showed anticlerics both the inherent patriotism of the Roman people and the cruelty of the papacy.

Despite her popularity, there is no focused study of Tavani Arquati's legacy. Her continued memorialization is significant, however, and complicates the role of gender in anti-Catholic discourse. In contrast to the commonly held belief that women supported the Catholic Church while men fought for a secular public sphere, Tavani Arquati is a notable example of a woman fiercely combatting the church and its control over Italian society. The celebrations of Tavani Arquati thus challenge any vision that places secularism and religiosity on a male-female binary and demonstrate how many Italians believed that women, mothers in particular, could be allies in the battle against the Catholic Church. Moreover, these celebrations reveal how heavily invested certain anti-Catholic thinkers were in reforming the familial arena to free it of what was considered by them to be a pernicious Catholic influence. Finally, the ongoing discussions of Tavani Arquati illustrate the intersections of the feminist and anti-Catholic movements, demonstrating how each group wielded an ideology of motherhood to promote their respective political agendas.

This article begins with a brief overview of the connections and tensions between the anti-Catholic and feminist movements in the first few decades of the Italian state. It then demonstrates how Italian patriots used Tavani Arquati's story in the lead-up to the Italian conquest of Rome on

¹ Felice Cavallotti, *Collana dei martiri italiani: storia della insurrezione di Roma nel 1867* (Milan: Presso la Libreria Dante Alighieri, 1869), 527.

² Garibaldi's invasion was also a failure. His forces were defeated by the French at Mentana on 3 November 1867.

³ The ages given for Antonio Arquati vary widely. Some sources claim he was as young as twelve, while others state he was already seventeen.

20 September 1870 to argue that the Roman people, including women, were against the papacy and deserving of the fight to liberate them. This article next analyzes Tavani Arquati's continued importance during the heated debates over the role of the Catholic Church in society during the first fifteen to twenty years of Italian rule in Rome. The final section examines the use of her martyrdom in the intensely anticlerical rebuilding of Rome from the late 1880s until the twenty-fifth anniversary of the capture of the city in 1895.

Nationalism, Anti-Catholicism, and Women's Emancipation

Anti-Catholic sentiment was quite strong in mid-nineteenth-century Italy, with nationalist imagery frequently depicting the pope, Catholic Church, and even elements of Catholic doctrine as obstacles to Italy's progress. Throughout the battles for unification and in the decades afterward, many moderate and left-wing Italians attempted to assert the primacy of the nation in public life and participated in a so-called culture war against conservative Catholics.⁴ Reflecting on the traditional approach to the study of gender in anti-Catholic discourse, the historian Manuel Borutta has argued that the culture wars in Italy "divided society into secularist (bourgeois, male, urban) and Catholic (clerical, female, rural) blocks."⁵ Other historians have likewise generally focused on the ways in which anti-Catholic discourse, both in Italy and abroad, oppressed women, framing them as irrational and emotional victims of Catholic manipulation in need of male salvation.⁶

Many Italian anti-Catholic thinkers, however, strongly supported female emancipation. Salvatore Morelli, arguably the most fervent advocate of women's rights in the early Italian parliament, clearly linked female emancipation and the limitation of the church's power in his *I tre disegni di leggi* (1867, *The Three Draft Laws*).⁷ Other anticlerical and freethinking periodicals, like Luigi Stefanoni's *Il libero pensiero* (Free Thought) and Alberto Mario's *La lega della democrazia* (The League of Democracy), likewise published articles promoting feminist initiatives.⁸ Despite their official prohibition on female lodges, the Italian Freemasons also generally advocated for the improvement of women's condition in society and allowed for certain women like Eugenia Huber Mengozzi and Giulia Caracciolo Cigala to serve in leadership roles.⁹

⁴ Guido Verucci, *L'Italia laica, prima e dopo l'Unità 1848-1876: anticlericalismo, libero pensiero e ateismo nella società italiana* (Bari: Editori Laterza, 1981); Clara Maria Lovett, *The Democratic Movement in Italy, 1830-1876* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982); Martin Papeheim, "Roma o morte: Culture Wars in Italy," in *Culture Wars: Secular-Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, ed. Christopher M. Clark and Wolfram Kaiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 202-26; Manuel Borutta, "Anti-Catholicism and the Culture War in Risorgimento Italy," in *The Risorgimento Revisited: Nationalism and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Italy*, ed. Silvana Patriarca and Lucy Riall (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 191-213.

⁵ Borutta, "Anti-Catholicism and the Culture War in Risorgimento Italy," 191.

⁶ Alberto Mario Banti, *L'onore della nazione: identità sessuali e violenza nel nazionalismo europeo dal XVIII secolo alla grande guerra* (Turin: Einaudi, 2005), 67-68; Michael B. Gross, *The War against Catholicism: Liberalism and the Anti-Catholic Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008); Cassandra L. Yacovazzi, *Escaped Nuns: True Womanhood and the Campaign against Convents in Antebellum America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018); Margaret Chowning, *Catholic Women and Mexican Politics, 1750-1940* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023).

⁷ Salvatore Morelli, *I tre disegni di legge sulla emancipazione della donna riforma della pubblica istruzione e circoscrizione legale del culto cattolico nella chiesa* (Florence: Tip. Franco-Italiana, 1867); Ginevra Conti Odorisio, *Salvatore Morelli (1824-1880): emancipazionismo e democrazia nell'Ottocento europeo* (Naples: ESI, 1992), 4.

⁸ Conti Odorisio, *Salvatore Morelli (1824-1880)*, 49-50; Verucci, *L'Italia laica*, 164-65.

⁹ Lucetta Scaraffia and Anna Maria Isastia, *Donne ottimiste: femminismo e associazioni borghesi nell'Otto e Novecento* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2002), 64; Francesca Vigni and Pier Domenico Vigni, *Donna e massoneria in Italia: dalle origini ad oggi* (Foggia: Editrice Italiana, 1997), 59-60.

Moreover, the majority of female Italian feminists found themselves in conflict with the Catholic Church. Though a number of moderate feminists, like Giulia Molino Colombini, both supported women's education and believed in the supremacy of Catholicism, many others were Protestant, Jewish, adherents of a Mazzinian nondenominational spirituality, or even rationalist freethinkers.¹⁰ Many feminist groups and individuals also promoted a variety of anti-Catholic and anticlerical efforts. The Central Committee for the Emancipation of Italian Women notably organized support for the conference held by Giuseppe Ricciardi in 1869 in opposition to the First Vatican Council, and its president Giulia Caracciolo Cigala praised Freemasonry as “uno strumento di emancipazione dal servaggio delle false dottrine del prete” (an instrument of emancipation from the servitude of the priest's false doctrines).¹¹ Gualberta Alaide Beccari's leading feminist journal *La donna* (Woman) regularly published on anti-Catholic issues while feminists Maria Serafini and Ernesta Margarita Napollon published their own anticlerical texts, such as Serafini's *Catechismo popolare per la libera pensatrice* (1869; Popular Catechism for the Freethinking Woman).¹² Giuseppe Mazzini opposed the materialist arguments of women like Serafini, even asking Giorgina Saffi to publicly criticize the *Catechismo*, but Mazzinian feminism itself was still highly critical of the Catholic Church and its traditions.¹³ Most proponents of female emancipation likewise supported anti-Catholic initiatives, including secular or nondenominational education, civil marriage, and divorce. For these Italians, women like Tavani Arquati were clearly allies in the fight to construct stronger Italian families free of the contaminating influence of the Catholic Church.

Early Italian feminists generally embraced motherhood and found purpose in their roles as mothers. As many scholars have demonstrated, these women believed in the educative power of motherhood and sought to serve their nation by imparting egalitarian and republican values to the next generation.¹⁴ Some of them also hoped to join the fight against clerical dominance from their position as mothers and benefited from the pressures of these culture wars, which allowed for a limited extension of the increased freedoms allotted to women during the Risorgimento. During what the historians Marjan Schwegman and Benedetta Gennaro have claimed was an otherwise increasingly repressive post-Unification period, anti-Catholic Italians continued to celebrate Tavani Arquati's violent death and envisioned a more expansive view of maternal duties in the

¹⁰ Liviana Gazzetta, “Women for the Homeland: Comparing Catholic and Protestant Female Education in Italy (1848–1908),” in *Rethinking the Age of Emancipation: Comparative and Transnational Perspectives on Gender, Family, and Religion in Italy and Germany, 1800–1918*, ed. Martin Baumeister, Philipp Lenhard, and Ruth Nattermann (New York: Berghahn, 2020), 221–22.

¹¹ Giuseppe Ricciardi, *L'anticoncilio di Napoli del 1869: promosso e descritto da Giuseppe Ricciardi già deputato al parlamento italiano* (Naples: Stabilimento Tipografico Strada S. Pietro a Majella, 1870), 134–35; Scaraffia and Isastia, *Donne ottimiste*, 64. Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own.

¹² Verucci, *L'Italia laica*, 209.

¹³ Liviana Gazzetta, ed., *Femminismo Mazziniano: un'idea di emancipazione nell'Italia post-unitaria (1868–1888)* (Rome: TAB Edizioni, 2022), 42–44.

¹⁴ Marina D'Amelia, *La mamma* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2005); Helena Sanson, “‘La madre educatrice’ in the Family and Society in Post-Unification Italy: The Question of Language,” in *Women and Gender in Post-Unification Italy: Between Private and Public Spheres*, ed. Katharine Mitchell and Helena Sanson (Bern: Peter Lang, 2013); Ilaria Porciani, *Famiglia e nazione nel lungo Ottocento italiano: modelli, strategie, reti di relazioni* (Rome: Viella, 2011); Costanza Bertolotti, ed., *La repubblica, la scienza, l'uguaglianza: una famiglia del Risorgimento tra mazzinanesimo ed emancipazionismo* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2012); Diana Moore, *Revolutionary Domesticity in the Italian Risorgimento: Transnational Victorian Feminism, 1850–1890* (New York: Palgrave, 2021); Gazzetta, *Femminismo mazziniano*.

context of the battle against Catholic domination.¹⁵ For many left-wing Italians, good mothers not only educated their children in patriotic values but were also physically strong and brave enough to fight—even in armed combat—for the family’s security and future.

Finally, Tavani Arquati provided an important example of the strength of Roman mothers and their willingness to fight against the clergy. The city of Rome served as a focal point in the mid-century culture wars.¹⁶ Pope Pius IX bitterly opposed the loss of his temporal rule over the city, while anti-Catholic Italians sought to reshape it in a secular fashion and constructed memorials to opponents of the papacy like Garibaldi, Cavour, or Giordano Bruno.¹⁷ In doing so, they contributed to the construction of a civil religion of the Risorgimento, complete with its own rituals, symbols, and martyrs.¹⁸ Nearly all of these martyrs were male, however, and Tavani Arquati was not only one of the few women celebrated by anti-Catholic writers and artists but she was also the only Roman woman.¹⁹ Her inclusion demonstrates how some Italians allowed for an alternative vision of anti-Catholic motherhood that accorded women a pivotal role in the regeneration of Rome and restoration of its ancient glory.

Tavani Arquati’s Legacy and the Conquest of Rome, 1867–70

In the years following her death, many left-wing Italians used Tavani Arquati’s story to argue for the conquest of the Eternal City. While many patriots like Mazzini were adamant about the need to end papal rule in Rome and create a new “Roma del popolo,” other Italians debated whether or not the city was fit to be the capital of the newly unified nation.²⁰ In 1861, for instance, Massimo D’Azeglio published *Questioni urgenti*, in which he challenged the idea that Rome was the natural future capital. Some critics, like D’Azeglio, contended that Rome represented a past from which Italy needed to distance itself in order to build a modern future, while others pointed out the city’s poor weather, prevalence of malaria, and relatively small size.²¹ In 1870 it had only about 212,000

¹⁵ Marjan Schwegman, “Amazons for Garibaldi: Women Warriors and the Making of the Hero of Two Worlds,” *Modern Italy* 15, no. 4 (November 2010): 417–32; Benedetta Gennaro, “Women in Arms: Gender in the Risorgimento, 1848–1861” (PhD diss., Brown University, 2010).

¹⁶ Borutta, “Anti-Catholicism and the Culture War in Risorgimento Italy,” 200–1.

¹⁷ Lars Berggren and Lennart Sjöstedt, *L’ombra dei grandi: monumenti e politica monumentale a Roma (1870–1895)* (Rome: Artemide Edizioni, 1996); Catherine Brice, “Pouvoirs, liturgies et monuments politiques à Rome (1870–1911),” in *Cérémonial et rituel à Rome (XVIIe–XIXe Siècle)*, ed. Maria Antonietta Visceglia and Catherine Brice (Rome: Publications de l’École Française de Rome, 1997), 369–91; Glauco Schettini, “Building the Third Rome: Italy, the Vatican, and the New District in Prati di Castello, 1870–1895,” *Modern Italy* 24, no. 1 (2019): 63–79; Taina Syrjämaa, *Constructing Unity, Living in Diversity: A Roman Decade* (Helsinki: Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, 2006).

¹⁸ Roland Sarti, *Mazzini: A Life for the Religion of Politics* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997); Alberto Mario Banti, *La nazione del Risorgimento: parentela, santità e onore alle origini dell’Italia unita* (Turin: G. Einaudi, 2000); Lucy Riall, “Martyr Cults in Nineteenth-Century Italy,” *The Journal of Modern History* 82 (June 2010): 255–87; Alberto Mario Banti, “The Remembrance of Heroes,” in *The Risorgimento Revisited: Nationalism and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Italy*, ed. Silvana Patriarca and Lucy Riall (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 171–90; Fulvio Conti, “The Religion of the Homeland: The Cult of ‘Martyrs of Freedom’ in Nineteenth-Century Italy,” *Journal of Modern European History* 12, no. 3 (2014): 398–417.

¹⁹ The statue of Anita Garibaldi on Janiculum Hill was not erected until 1932.

²⁰ Alberto Caracciolo, *Roma capitale: dal Risorgimento alla crisi dello stato liberale* (Rome: Edizioni Rinascita, 1956); Géraldine Djament-Tran, “Le Débat sur Rome capitale (1861–1871): Choix de localisation et achèvement de la construction nationale italienne,” *Revue Historique* 311, no. 1(649) (January 2009): 99–118.

²¹ Syrjämaa, *Constructing Unity, Living in Diversity*, 136; Djament-Tran, “Le Débat sur Rome capitale (1861–1871),” 113; Francesco Bartolini, “La nazionalizzazione dell’idea di Roma: un rompicapo per il patriottismo ottocentesco,” *Dimensioni e problemi della ricerca storica* 29, no. 1 (2016): 72.

residents and required substantial development before it could appropriately serve as the capital.²² Other critics, like Ferdinando Petrucelli della Gattina, questioned the allegiance and character of the Roman people. In 1862, decrying Romans' lack of revolutionary spirit, Petrucelli della Gattina claimed in parliament that, "i Romani d'oggi non sono più i Romani del 1848, essi sono i Romani di San Pietro" (the Romans of today are no longer the Romans of 1848, they are the Romans of St. Peter).²³

In the face of this opposition, proponents of *Roma capitale* relied on figures like Tavani Arquati to show that Romans were devout patriots who deserved liberation from papal rule. On 13 December 1867, the left-wing patriot Giuseppe Guerzoni referenced her in his plea for greater funding for a potential Roman insurrection. The Roman people, he asserted, were willing to fight, but had not been supplied with sufficient weaponry by their allies, and "un popolo inerme non può che protestare" (an unarmed people can only protest).²⁴ For Guerzoni, Tavani Arquati's full-fledged participation in the violence at the Ajani home served as key evidence of the potential militarism of Romans. The *Gazzetta Ferrarese* similarly argued that she had displayed the virtues of ancient Rome and should serve as an example for those who wished to liberate themselves from eternal slavery by foreigners.²⁵

Many references to Tavani Arquati stressed this connection between modern and ancient Rome. In his volume on the 1867 uprising, Felice Cavallotti claimed that the spirit of ancient Rome stayed alive under the oppression of papal rule, "come la lava incandescente nelle viscere di un vulcano" (like white-hot lava in the bowels of a volcano).²⁶ He then cited Tavani Arquati as a key example of the long-standing resistance of Romans to the papacy alongside figures like Arnaldo da Brescia and Ciceruacchio.²⁷ In these figures, he argued, flowed "il sangue, e il genio dell'Italia; qui l'anello d'unione tra l'antica e la nuova unità" (the blood, the genius of Italy; here [is] the link between the ancient and new unity).²⁸ As the only female figure mentioned, Tavani Arquati also stood as an example of the ideal Roman mother who not only taught her children patriotic values but also was physically robust and willing to fight for their freedom. Cavallotti noted how Tavani Arquati used her dagger in defense of her husband and son. Comparing her to the ancient goddess of vengeance, he stated: "Ha gli occhi fuori delle orbite, le labra livide per ira, balbettanti strozzati accenti; pare la Nemese antica, – e forse è!" (Her eyes popped out of their sockets, her lips were livid with anger and stammering in strangled accents; she seems to be the ancient Nemesis, – and perhaps she is!).²⁹ This portrayal is significant because it shows Tavani Arquati embracing her

²² David Atkinson and Denis Cosgrove, "Urban Rhetoric and Embodied Identities: City, Nation, and Empire at the Vittorio Emanuele II Monument in Rome, 1870–1945," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 88, no. 1 (1998): 31.

²³ Fiorella Bartoccini, "Il problema di Roma capitale e i Romani," in *La fine del potere temporale e il ricongiungimento di Roma all'Italia: atti del XLV congresso di Storia del Risorgimento Italiano* (Rome: Istituto per la Storia del Risorgimento Italiano, 1972), 597.

²⁴ Ercole Stambanoni, *Roma, Napoleone III e i ministeri italiani* (Livorno: Tip. A.B. Zecchini, 1868), 115–16.

²⁵ "Giuditta Arcuati," *Gazzetta Ferrarese*, 26 October 1869, a. XXII, n.245.

²⁶ Cavallotti, *Collana dei martiri italiani*, 527.

²⁷ Arnaldo da Brescia (1090–1155) sought the reform of the Catholic Church and participated in the failed Comune of Rome, for which he was hanged by the papacy. Angelo Brunetti (1800–49), more commonly known as Ciceruacchio, participated in the Roman Republic of 1849 and was afterwards captured by Austrian troops, who executed both him and his son by firing squad.

²⁸ Cavallotti, *Collana dei martiri italiani*, 527.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 530.

anger and does not prioritize her feminine or sexualized beauty, which many male authors tended to do.³⁰

Cavallotti linked Tavani Arquati's armed resistance to her desire to protect her family and to the general republican desire to raise a new generation of Italians free of the Catholic Church's control. For Cavallotti, Tavani Arquati stood as a model of this new republican style of motherhood, as she vowed that "la mia famiglia... crescerà alla libertà" (my family will grow in freedom).³¹ Further framing the conspiracy as a familial endeavor, he noted that her eldest daughters Rosa and Virginia, "carissime e virtuosissime fanciulle" (dearest and most virtuous daughters), helped manufacture cartridges and musket balls.³² He clarified, however, that Tavani Arquati did not expect her family to face the same dangers as she did, and took precautions to protect the most vulnerable members, sending the younger children away when the fighting became imminent. His account also maintained that Antonio Arquati, who threw the first bomb, did so not by accident or out of misplaced enthusiasm, but to defend his sisters, whom the papal forces were threatening next door.³³

In these patriotic narratives, the revolutionaries' protection of the vulnerable stood in direct contrast to the brutality of the papal regime. In October 1868, the *Giornale di Udine* used Tavani Arquati's story to highlight the false kindness and hypocritical violence of Pius IX's rule. The paper noted how the pope had displayed his "cuore paterno" (paternal heart) by promoting the Zouave who, "rese cadavere con replicati colpi di baionetta la infelice Giuditta Arquati, incinta da varii mesi!!!" (with repeated strikes of the bayonet made a corpse of the poor Giuditta Arquati, several months pregnant!!!).³⁴ The *Giornale di Udine* repeated this violent anti-Catholic language a few months later, claiming that the victims of the uprising had been killed to satisfy the "libidine di sangue nei nostri preti" (the blood lust of our priests).³⁵ These accounts often focused on Tavani Arquati's pregnancy as particular evidence of the papal mercenaries' villainy. The historian Ercole Stampanoni described the papal soldiers as "jene feroci" (ferocious *hyenas*) who attacked the seven-months-pregnant Tavani Arquati. He further claimed she had "il seno rovisato dall'escrabi ferro che estraeva pur fuori una creaturina non nata" (her breasts ravaged by that same abominable iron which also extracted an unborn little being [from her]).³⁶ Cavallotti similarly stated that even after someone called out that Tavani Arquati was pregnant the Zouave stabbed her in the stomach, tearing it open, and "nel feto son recati gli ultimi colpi" (the last blows went into the fetus).³⁷ These gruesome images served to incite rage against the Catholic Church among readers.

As further evidence of her cultural relevance, Tavani Arquati's death also served as the basis for several anti-Catholic novels. In 1870, Mario Paganetti published *Giuditta Tavani: scene dell'insurrezione di Roma nel 1867* (Giuditta Tavani: Scenes from the 1867 Insurrection in Rome), a highly edited version of the events which was intended as evidence of clerical vice and a plea to

³⁰ For more on the sexualization of women's bodies in nationalist imagery, see: Banti, *L'onore della nazione*; Diana Moore, "Amazons and Fallen Women: Transgressive Female Behaviour in the Novels of Giuseppe Garibaldi," *Modern Italy* 26, no. 1 (2021): 13–27.

³¹ Cavallotti, *Collana dei martiri italiani*, 527.

³² *Ibid.*, 528.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ "Corriere del mattino," *Giornale di Udine*, 30 October 1868, a. III, n.259.

³⁵ "Roma," *Giornale di Udine*, 9 December 1868, a. III, n.293.

³⁶ Stampanoni, *Roma, Napoleone III e i ministeri italiani*, 114.

³⁷ Cavallotti, *Collana dei martiri italiani*, 531.

free Rome from the papacy.³⁸ That same year, a serialized story published in *Roma papale svelata al popolo* (Papal Rome Revealed to the People) used her story to reveal the “scelleraggine clericale, che regna in Roma, bestemmiando il nome di Cristo” (clerical wickedness, which reigns in Rome, blaspheming the name of Christ).³⁹ The revisionist narrative took great license with Tavani Arquati’s life, depicting her as the widowed daughter of an elderly Giulio Ajani and mother to two small children.⁴⁰ Emphasizing her maternity and victimhood, it claimed Tavani Arquati died defending her children, “col piccino sul braccio sinistro e avvinghiato al collo, coll’altro bimbo aggrappato alle vesti” (with the little one on her left arm and wrapped around her neck, and the other child clinging to her skirts).⁴¹ Though these fictionalized accounts reflected more traditional gender politics, by downplaying Tavani Arquati’s agency and framing her as a victim of Catholic villainy they also kept her name in the public consciousness.

Even Garibaldi found literary inspiration in Tavani Arquati’s story. In his novel *Clelia* (1870), a romanticized depiction of his failed 1867 campaign, Garibaldi drew on the figure of Tavani Arquati for the character of Irene. Like Tavani Arquati, Irene dies alongside her husband in a battle against papal troops that is set in a large wool manufactory in Trastevere. Irene is not participating in the fighting, however, and instead has been acting as a nurse when she runs over to be near her fallen husband and is shot by the enemy.⁴² Garibaldi’s text emphasizes her beauty and love for her husband Orazio, stating that she

visto Orazio che era rimasto giacente sopra alla barricata — la bella donna — incurante del proprio pericolo — volle salire pur essa — ma cadde colpita nella bellissima fronte — da una palla de’ moschetti — che i mercenari dopo il loro insuccesso — sparavano rabbiosamente nel vuoto del portone

saw Orazio who had remained lying on the barricade — the beautiful woman — heedless of her own danger — wanted to go up too — but fell hit in her beautiful forehead — by a musket-ball — which after their failure the mercenaries — shot angrily into the empty doorway.⁴³

By replacing the belligerent Tavani Arquati with the beautiful and unarmed Irene, Garibaldi intensified his accusations that the papal soldiers were dishonorable mercenaries.

Tavani Arquati’s legacy remained important during the celebrations following the Italian conquest of Rome. In July 1870, the French government withdrew its troops, leaving the city protected only by an Italian promise to the French not to invade. Following the disastrous French defeat at the Battle of Sedan, however, the Third Republic was declared on 4 September 1870. Many in the Italian government believed that this transition of power freed them from any previous

³⁸ Mario Paganetti, *Giuditta Tavani: scene dell’insurrezione di Roma nel 1867* (Milan: Presso l’Editore Giulio Bestetti, 1870), iv.

³⁹ “I processi di Roma: I misteri del processo Ajani e Luzzi,” *Roma papale svelata al popolo* 3 (January 1870): 2.

⁴⁰ “I processi di Roma: I misteri del processo Ajani e Luzzi,” *Roma papale svelata al popolo* 5 (March 1870):3-5.

⁴¹ “I processi di Roma: I misteri del processo Ajani e Luzzi,” *Roma papale svelata al popolo* 6 (April 1870): 4.

⁴² Though the character of Irene does not fight in the final battle scene, she participates in a battle earlier in the novel. Many of the female characters in Garibaldi’s novels fight both in patriotic battles and against the Catholic priests who attempt to sexually assault them. His novels generally contain an atypical acceptance of female violence for the time. For more, see Moore, “Amazons and Fallen Women.”

⁴³ Giuseppe Garibaldi, *Clelia: il governo del monaco* (Milan: Fratelli Rechiedei, 1870), 452.

agreement, and on 20 September 1870 Italian troops entered the Eternal City through Porta Pia.⁴⁴ The people of Rome generally welcomed the end of papal rule, and though the authorities desperately tried to attract volunteer fighters, only two hundred people enlisted. Following the Italian conquest, moreover, many Roman papers published articles discussing how happy the city's residents were to be free of papal rule.⁴⁵

In the context of these celebrations, the third anniversary of Tavani Arquati's death took on special significance. According to the stridently anticlerical Alberto Mario, no less than seventy thousand people visited the Ajani home on 25 October 1870 as part of a patriotic pilgrimage, and nearly as many people visited in the following days.⁴⁶ The *Gazzetta del popolo* likewise claimed that all of Trastevere, and not merely the radical left, participated in the event.⁴⁷ Visitors to the house viewed a hastily constructed wood-and-gesso monument to the fallen, comprised of a bust of Tavani Arquati alongside four stones with an inscription memorializing these martyrs "alla tirannide sacerdotale" (against priestly tyranny).⁴⁸ They also witnessed physical reminders of the fighting, including holes left in the walls by the Zouaves' bayonet thrusts. Mario argued that the people of Rome interpreted the violent deaths in the Casa Ajani as evidence of the Catholic Church's brutality and that "molte imprecazioni e maledizioni proruppero contro i preti, contro il papa" (many imprecations and curses broke out against the priests, against the pope).⁴⁹ He also portrayed Tavani Arquati as an exemplar of patriotic Roman motherhood and claimed that the bust of her displayed a woman "con aspetto e forme di matrona antica, aspetto e forme che ancora si ravvisano nelle donne trasteverine" (with the look and shape of an ancient matron, a look and shape that can still be seen in the women of Trastevere).⁵⁰ He thus used Tavani Arquati as a link between the women of ancient Rome and those of modern Trastevere.

Unsurprisingly, the Catholic press challenged this portrayal of Tavani Arquati as an ideal mother and instead asserted that she had wrongly indoctrinated her children in radical politics and brought about her son's death. In a reversal of the anti-Catholic argument that the clergy manipulated women, *La civiltà cattolica* (Catholic Civilization) asserted that Tavani Arquati's involvement in the 1867 uprising revealed how radicals involved innocents in their sectarian plots. It added that "gli onesti non iscorgeranno in lei altro che un esempio lacrimevole di quanto può l'odio settario a scellerare eziando un cuore di donna" (honest people will see in her nothing but a tearful example of how much sectarian hatred can taint even a woman's heart).⁵¹ Refusing to accept the characterization of Tavani Arquati as a tragic victim, the periodical described her as a full participant in the fighting and thus deserving of the papal forces' appropriate countermeasures. Even though many of her companions had fallen, it claimed, Tavani Arquati fought on and, grinning, "scagliavasi alla vita degli assalitori, e tentava a bruciapelo i colpi della rivoltella, sì che fu forza infine, per quanto ne ripugnasse a soldati di valore, inchiodar quella forsennata colla baionetta" (flung herself at the very life of her assailants, and attempted point-blank shots with a revolver, until finally, as much as the brave soldiers found it repugnant, they were forced to nail

⁴⁴ David I. Kertzer, *Prisoner of the Vatican: The Popes' Secret Plot to Capture Rome from the New Italian State* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004), 42–43.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁴⁶ Alberto Mario, "Sante memorie," *La donna: periodico morale e istruttivo*, 6 November 1870, a. III, n.134.

⁴⁷ "Cronaca cittadina," *Gazzetta del popolo*, 27 October 1870, a. I, n.24, 134–35.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 134; Berggren and Sjöstedt, *L'ombra dei grandi*, 13.

⁴⁹ Mario, "Sante memorie," 534.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 533.

⁵¹ "I crociati di San Pietro: scene storiche del 1867," *La civiltà cattolica* 9 (1870): 52.

down that madwoman with bayonets).⁵² Finally, *La civiltà cattolica* maintained that an autopsy had revealed that Tavani Arquati was not pregnant and that any rumors of her pregnancy were simply a Garibaldian ploy to incite sympathy.⁵³ From the Catholic perspective, Tavani Arquati lacked the characteristics that made women honorable, virtuous, or worthy of protection.

Despite these allegations, the Italian government demonstrated their official support for Tavani Arquati. To honor her sacrifice, it established an annual stipend of four thousand lire to be distributed equally among her eight remaining children. The boys would receive the subsidy until they came of legal age at twenty-one while the girls would receive theirs until they were married.⁵⁴ In addition, when the girls married, they were to receive a dowry of five thousand lire; the boys likewise were to receive a comparable sum upon reaching legal age.⁵⁵ By establishing this subsidy, the state cemented Tavani Arquati's place in Roman patriotic history.

Female Anti-Catholicism in the Italian Culture Wars, 1871–87

The conflict over the Catholic Church's position in Italian society did not end with the Italian army's entry into Rome. Many Catholics, both in Italy and abroad, saw the Italian occupation of the city as an affront to the church's dignity. Reflecting his displeasure, on 1 November 1870 Pius IX issued a new encyclical *Respicientes ea omnis* (Looking at Them All) in which he excommunicated the leaders of the Italian nation and declared its occupation of the Papal States null and void. Many Italian government officials hoped to mitigate Catholic outrage by offering protections and accommodations to the church. The Italian anticlerical movement, however, strongly opposed these proposals.⁵⁶ Much of this opposition came from Rome itself. *La capitale*, the first republican daily newspaper in Rome, for instance, quickly pushed for immediately transferring the capital to Rome, banning Jesuits, shutting down the religious orders, and keeping priests out of public schools.⁵⁷ The following years witnessed ongoing debate and occasional violent clashes between Catholics and anticlerics in the Eternal City. The July 1881 funeral procession of Pope Pius IX notably descended into chaos as a result of anti-Catholic protesters. Approximately two hundred to three hundred people attacked the procession and threatened to throw the pope's body off the Sant'Angelo bridge and into the Tiber River.⁵⁸ In this era of the culture wars, tensions between anti-Catholic and Catholic forces permeated every area of private practice and government policy.

Some Italian patriots sought to create a new civil religion to replace Catholic practice, and to that end orchestrated multiple celebrations of Tavani Arquati. To mark the tenth anniversary of the violence at the Casa Ajani in 1877, for instance, a large procession walked from Piazza del Popolo to the Ajani home, where a stone memorial was installed to replace the earlier wood-and-gesso one.⁵⁹ The left-wing mayor of Rome at the time, Pietro Venturi, spoke at the ceremony. In an indication of the contested nature of these celebrations, the bells from the nearby church of San Crisogno rang during Venturi's speech and interrupted him. *Il popolo romano* claimed that this

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 55.

⁵⁴ "Notizie interne e fatti vari," *L'opinione*, 2 November 1870, a. XXIII, n.305, 3.

⁵⁵ Edoardo Arbib, *Sommario degli atti del consiglio comunale di Roma dall'anno 1870 al 1895* (Rome: Tipografia dei Fratelli Bencini, 1895), 291.

⁵⁶ Kertzer, *Prisoner of the Vatican*, 85.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 111.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 185.

⁵⁹ "Piccolo corriere di Roma: la lapide della casa Aiani," *L'opinione*, 29 October 1877, a. XXX, n.296, 2.

was a deliberate sign of the Catholic Church's disdain for the ceremony.⁶⁰ Around fifty thousand people then participated in the anniversary celebration two years later, which included the inauguration of a stone bust of Tavani Arquati made by a former *garibaldino*, Achille Della Bitta.⁶¹ These celebrations were well-publicized in *L'illustrazione italiana* and the *Rivista illustrata settimanale*.⁶² Taken together, they show Tavani Arquati's continued presence in public discourse.

The various references to Tavani Arquati during the early 1880s continued to stress her opposition to the papacy. The most notable of these is likely the 1882 foundation of the Associazione Democratica Giuditta Tavani Arquati, which promoted anticlerical and republican endeavors.⁶³ In 1882, Carlo Ademollo presented his painting *La strage della famiglia Tavani-Arquati* (*The Massacre of the Tavani-Arquati Family*) to the Accademia della Belle Arti.⁶⁴ Revealing the anti-Catholic intent of the work, the weekly periodical *Il dovere* maintained that Ademollo's depiction of Tavani Arquati and her son "trucidati dai soldati del papa" (slaughtered by the pope's soldiers) aroused "ira e pietà" (anger and sympathy) in the viewer.⁶⁵ In 1883, Francesco Cucchi, who had been involved in the failed 1867 uprising in Rome, founded a committee to move the remains of Tavani Arquati and her companions to a crypt in Campo Verano.⁶⁶ The memorial was part of a larger movement to secularize the cemetery by advocating cremation, symbols of Freemasonry, and the burial of non-Catholics.⁶⁷ It was inaugurated as part of the 1885 anniversary of her death.⁶⁸ Revealing its anti-papal sentiments, the inscription on the crypt stated that Tavani Arquati and her companions had been "assassinati / dai mercenari / del Papa-re" (murdered / by the mercenaries / of the Pope-king).⁶⁹

The commemorations also emphasized the victimization and suffering of the Arquatis and framed the papacy as a threat to Italian families. According to *L'opinione*, the biggest moment of the 1877 celebrations came when Napoleone Parboni pointed out Tavani Arquati's two eldest daughters standing in a nearby window and drew the focus of the crowd to the need for male protection in the face of female suffering.⁷⁰ In his 1879 biography of Garibaldi, Alberto Mario similarly included descriptions of the misfortunes of the Arquati children in the aftermath of their parents' death. He noted how Pasquale and Rosa were forced to assume leadership roles in the family at the ages of twenty and eighteen, respectively, and how they suffered in poverty for two years before Pasquale was eventually forced to move to Venice to find work. The fate of the young sons—Giuseppe, Giovanni, and Vincenzo—was even more tragic. Mario claimed that the papal government locked the boys away in a school in Alatri under false names and "nell'animo de' quali studiò di spegnere ogni sentimento di famiglia, e di persuaderli che Giuditta fosse un'avventuriera

⁶⁰ Berggren and Sjöstedt, *L'ombra dei grandi*, 28.

⁶¹ "Ultime notizie," *Giornale di Udine*, 27 October 1879, a. XIV, n.256; Angelo De Gubernatis, *Dizionario degli artisti italiani viventi: pittori, scultori e architetti* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1892), 167–68.

⁶² "La lapide di casa Ajani," *L'illustrazione italiana*, 11 November 1877, a. IV, n.45; "Le nostre incisioni: commemorazione patriottica a casa Ajani a Roma," *Rivista illustrata settimanale*, 9 November 1879, n.45.

⁶³ Giovanni Orsina, *Anticlericalismo e democrazia: storia del partito radicale in Italia e a Roma, 1901–1914* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubettino, 2002), 107.

⁶⁴ P Necessitas, "Arti belle e brutte," *L'arte: rivista di lettere di arti, di teatri e di società*, 23 December 1882, a. X, n.1.

⁶⁵ "Giuditta Tavani-Arquati e i martiri di casa Ajani," *Il dovere*, 9 March 1884, a. IX, n.315.

⁶⁶ "Corriere," *Giornale di Udine*, 4 December 1883, a. XVII, n.289.

⁶⁷ Hannah Malone, "Secularisation, Anticlericalism and Cremation within Italian Cemeteries of the Nineteenth Century," *Modern Italy* 19, no. 4 (2014): 385–403.

⁶⁸ "Roma, 25 ottobre," *Fanfulla*, 25 October 1885, a. XVI, n.290.

⁶⁹ Berggren and Sjöstedt, *L'ombra dei grandi*, 45.

⁷⁰ "Piccolo corriere di Roma," 2. Parboni married the youngest daughter, Adelaide Arquati, in 1890.

greca e non fosse la loro madre” (attempted to extinguish every familial sentiment in their beings and to convince them that Giuditta was a Greek adventuress and not their mother).⁷¹ When the older siblings were able to finally locate and reunite with their younger siblings after September 1870, he added, the children did not recognize them. The loving care of Rosa, however, helped restore their familial bonds. Mario also praised the Italian government for establishing the subsidy for the Arquati children.⁷² He thereby contrasted the Italian state’s protection of the weak and vulnerable with his account of the Catholic Church’s exploitation, manipulation, and division.

Some of the left-wing Italians who sought to nurture Italian youth through a reformed educational policy likewise found Tavani Arquati’s story useful in their campaign as evidence of the potential of Roman girls. Placing great faith in the possibility of a revitalized education to create a new generation of citizens, Mazzini and other Italian patriots hoped to end Catholic control over schools. As part of this effort, Sara Nathan, one of Mazzini’s most devout adherents, decided to open a primary school in Trastevere following his death in 1872. Nathan chose Rome for her school’s location partially because she had moved there to help her son Ernesto run the Mazzinian newspaper *Roma del popolo*. She established the school in Trastevere, however, because of the symbolic importance of the neighborhood and Tavani Arquati’s connection to it. According to her son, “le piacque sorgesse in questo rione ove il popolo ha così fulgide tradizioni di patriottismo, in questo fiero Trastevere sacro ai ricordi della Repubblica del ’49, custode della memoria e dell’esempio di Giuditta Tavani Arquati” (it pleased her [that the school] should be established in this district where the people have such shining traditions of patriotism, in this proud Trastevere sacred to the memories of the 1849 Republic, guardian of the memory and example of Giuditta Tavani Arquati).⁷³ An article published in *La donna* in 1877 similarly celebrated the school as a means of bringing out the true Roman potential of the children of Trastevere. It described them as “quelle figlie di un popolo in cui l’antico valore romano è tutt’altro che morto dal momento che malgrado l’evirante dominio dei preti ha potuto ancor produrre bambine di una sì eccezionale vivacità d’ingegno” (those daughters of a people in which ancient Roman valor is far from dead, since despite the emasculating domination of the priests it has been able to produce little girls of such exceptionally lively intelligence).⁷⁴

As the article in *La donna* demonstrates, removal of priestly influence was key to the transformation of the Roman people. Nathan’s school was likely the first secular private school in Rome and substituted Mazzinian principles for the traditional religious instruction offered in other Roman schools.⁷⁵ The Roman clergy staunchly opposed this secularized instruction and, according to Nathan’s children, “vedevano la perdizione in quell’insegnamento e rifiutavano quindi la Pasqua e le comunione alle bambine che confessassero di frequentare questa Scuola” (saw perdition in that teaching and therefore refused Easter and communion to those little girls who confessed to attending this school).⁷⁶ Nathan also required that the girls in her school receive a curriculum identical to that found in boys’ schools, a tenet that stood at the intersection of the anti-Catholic

⁷¹ Alberto Mario, *Garibaldi* (Genoa: Regio Stabilimento L. Lavagnino, 1879), 153–54.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 154.

⁷³ Gustavo Canti, *Parole pronunciate dal Prof. Gustavo Canti alla scuola professionale femminile: “Giuseppe Mazzini” Opera Pia “Sarina Nathan” il 20 febbraio 1922 in occasione della premiazione annuale* (Milan: Albrighi, Segati & Co., 1922), 10.

⁷⁴ “Alla scuola Mazzini,” *La donna: periodico morale e istruttivo*, 30 April 1877, a. IX, n.292.

⁷⁵ Moore, *Revolutionary Domesticity in the Italian Risorgimento* 2021, 146–47.

⁷⁶ Adah Nathan Castiglioni and Ernesto Nathan to Jessie White Mario, Central Museum of the Risorgimento in Rome, Fondo Jessie White Mario, busta 405, n.6, Rome, Italy.

and feminist movements.⁷⁷ Other feminists similarly spoke out against Catholic education. In her women's journal, *La donna e la civiltà* (Women and Civilization), Caterina Faccion-Berlinguer celebrated institutions like Nathan's that sought to remove education from the monopoly of the Catholic Church and eliminate what she viewed as a Catholic focus on rote memorization and superstition.⁷⁸

Many of the references to Tavani Arquati repeated the assertion that the Roman people carried on the legacy of ancient Rome and were inherently opposed to the papacy. In a banquet held to celebrate anticlerical republicanism in December 1881, Alberto Mario claimed the "Roma vera" (true Rome) was one that defended the Roman Republic of 1849, exiles, and the "resistenza in casa Ajani, ove veggio circonclusa di luce immortale una donna" (resistance in the Ajani house, where I see a woman bathed in immortal light).⁷⁹ In 1884, *Il dovere* similarly called the participants in the uprising in the Ajani home the "vere Vestali d'Italia" (true Vestals of Italy) who had maintained "il fuoco sacro dell'insurrezione" (the sacred fire of insurrection), stating that Tavani Arquati had "morì romanamente... perché non piegò costa davanti agli sgherri" (died like a Roman, because she did not bend her spine to the [papal] thugs). The paper also glorified her as a model of an ideal Roman mother, stating that "in lei l'affetto di madri si accoppiava a tutta la virilità del carattere di una trasteverina non tralignata" (in her maternal affection was coupled with all the strength of character of a woman wholly of Trastevere).⁸⁰ Their praise for Tavani Arquati reveals how certain left-wing thinkers promoted women's active engagement in the reclaiming of Italy from Catholic influence.

This new vision of anti-Catholic Roman motherhood likewise allowed for a greater range of acceptable maternal activities, including engaging in physical violence and participating in revolutionary uprisings. In 1877, *L'illustrazione italiana* claimed that Tavani Arquati "percorreva tutta la casa incoraggiando i combattenti, e portava le bombe e caricava i fucili" (roamed through the whole house encouraging the combatants, and she carried the bombs and loaded the rifles). The author of this article added that she remained brave even in the face of death and "ne attese impavida gli assassini col revolver in pugno" (she fearlessly awaited the assassins with a revolver in her hand). Describing her as an "ammiranda popolana trasteverina" (admirable commoner from Trastevere), the paper used her as a symbol of what Roman women could be.⁸¹ In her 1886 biography of Mazzini, Jessie White Mario likewise presented Tavani Arquati as an example of how Romans, including Roman women, fought against the papacy and for Italy. She asserted that "non doveva essere detto che Roma si levava senza le romane" (it should not be said that Rome rose without the Roman women) and noted how Tavani Arquati participated in the combat in the Ajani home. White Mario further argued that Tavani Arquati died "salvando l'onore di Roma" (saving the honor of Rome).⁸² In doing so, she reversed the tropes of standard patriotic narratives, in which male heroes fight to restore women's honor once it was stolen by the perfidious clergy.

Catholics continued to oppose the veneration of Tavani Arquati. In response to the 1879 bust, *La civiltà cattolica* published an article condemning her valorization entitled "Apotheosi d'una Giuditta settarie" (Apotheosis of a sectarian Judith). The paper opposed the deification of a woman considered to be nothing more than a dangerous rebel who was justly killed after throwing bombs

⁷⁷ Moore, *Revolutionary Domesticity in the Italian Risorgimento*, 146.

⁷⁸ Caterina Faccion-Berlinguer, "Pensieri sull'educazione," *La donna e la civiltà*, July 1876, a. II, n.7, 99.

⁷⁹ "Manifestazione repubblicana: Il banchetto ad Alberto Mario," *Il dovere*, 11 December 1881, a. VI, n.199.

⁸⁰ "Giuditta Tavani-Arquati e i martiri di casa Ajani."

⁸¹ "Le nostre incisioni," 2.

⁸² Jessie White Mario, *Della vita di Giuseppe Mazzini* (Milan: Edoardo Sonzogno Editore, 1886), 445.

and aiming a revolver at government officials. Characterizing anticlericalism as a false perversion of religion, it lamented that “la setta ne fece una *santa eroina*; ed alli 26 ottobre, dedicandole una specie di altare, fece l’apologia del tradimento e della ribellione a mano armata” (the sect made her a saintly heroine; and on October 26, by dedicating a sort of altar to her, vindicated treason and armed rebellion).⁸³ After adding that the papal troops were only defending the legitimate sovereign, it wondered if the Italian government would similarly celebrate a woman who threw bombs at the carabinieri or officials of King Umberto. Finally, the paper cautioned: “badi il Governo che lasciar glorificare l’assassinio e le congiure non abbia a costargli troppo caro!” (let the government take care that allowing the glorification of assassination and conspiracies does not cost it too dearly!).⁸⁴ The ongoing criticism of the figure of Tavani Arquati reveals the continued division in Italian society over the influence and position of the Catholic Church.

A Female Martyr during the Anti-Catholic Rebuilding of Rome, 1887–95

During the late 1880s, Italian anti-Catholicism became more aggressive. In 1885, Adriano Lemmi rose to leadership of the Italian Freemasons and, according to the historian Martin Papenheim, pushed the organization in “a more trenchantly anti-Catholic, atheistic and anti-Christian orientation.”⁸⁵ Two years later, fellow Freemason and patriot Francesco Crispi was elected prime minister and pursued an anticlerical agenda on the national level.⁸⁶ As part of their opposition to the church, these left-wing Italians sought to physically rebuild the city of Rome. In 1882, for instance, the city government crafted a plan for construction of the new district of Prati next to the Vatican. The monument to King Victor Emanuel II, on which construction began in 1885, as well as the Palazzo di Giustizia, which followed four years later, similarly challenged the papacy and provided alternative focal points to St. Peter’s in the city skyline.⁸⁷

Anticlerical Italians also arranged for the installation of a statue of Giordano Bruno in the Campo de’ Fiori in June 1889. A former Dominican monk, Bruno had been charged with heresy and burned at the stake in the square in February 1600.⁸⁸ Support for Bruno had grown during the second half of the nineteenth century, particularly among university students and Freemasons, who celebrated him as a symbol of those victims of “papalism, intolerance, and fanaticism.”⁸⁹ The inauguration ceremony drew a large crowd, with over ten thousand people marching in the procession and one hundred and nineteen members of the House of Deputies as well as sixteen senators attending the unveiling. A small group of women also made their presence known with an elaborate wreath from “the Anticlerical Women of Rome.”⁹⁰ This female anticlerical support for the Bruno monument reveals the continued impact of Tavani Arquati’s legacy as well as women’s continued participation in the battle against Catholic dominance. Moreover, the sculptor of the statue, the Freemason Ettore Ferrari, was a member of the Società Tavani-Arquati.

⁸³ “Apoteosi d’una Giuditta settarie,” *La civiltà cattolica* 8 (6 December 1879): a. 30.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Papenheim, “Roma o morte,” 213.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 218.

⁸⁷ Terry Rossi Kirk, “The Politicization of the Landscape of Roma Capitale and the Symbolic Role of the Palazzo di Giustizia,” *Mélanges de l’École française de Rome: Italie e Méditerranée* 109, no. 1 (1997): 89–114; Atkinson and Cosgrove, “Urban Rhetoric and Embodied Identities,” 33–34; Catherine Brice, *Monumentalité publique et politique à Rome: Le Vittoriano* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1998).

⁸⁸ Kertzer, *Prisoner of the Vatican*, 259.

⁸⁹ Papenheim, “Roma o Morte,” 218.

⁹⁰ Kertzer, *Prisoner of the Vatican*, 267.

The ongoing commemorations of Tavani Arquati reflected this increasingly strident anticlericalism. While some earlier pilgrimages to the Casa Ajani had launched from the Piazza del Popolo, the 1892 memorial walk started in the Campo dei Fiori.⁹¹ The 1893 anniversary celebration then began at the Piazza del Collegio Romano, the former Jesuit secondary school, and a repeated center of conflict between Catholic and anti-Catholic forces. About one hundred members of twenty anticlerical circles walked in the procession, which ended with speeches “imprecando al dominio dei preti” (cursing the dominion of the priests). As with the unveiling of the Bruno statue, though the event was largely male, there were three or four women from a women’s group that participated.⁹² Their presence indicates how some feminists continued to support radical anti-Catholic initiatives.

On 21 October 1890, Matilde Milla, Rosa Salvatori, and Ernesta Fusari then created the Circolo Anticlericale Femminile Giuditta Tavani Arquati in Rome. The organization hoped to provide mutual aid and promote anti-Catholic and republican propaganda.⁹³ Avowing their hostility to the church, the organization aimed to emancipate women from “superstizione e dall’ignoranza” (superstition and ignorance) and to guide them toward anticlerical and democratic principles. In cooperation with male anticlerical societies, they promised to abstain from any rites of the Catholic Church and follow civil laws for customs like births, marriages, and deaths.⁹⁴ In glorifying Tavani Arquati as a model for their aggressively anticlerical agenda, Milla, Fusari, and Salvatori represent the more radical side of the Italian feminist movement.

It was far more common for feminist publications to combine their discussions of Tavani Arquati with references to Adelaide Cairolì, who famously lost four of her five sons in the battles for unification, and to promote Cairolì as the ideal Italian mother. In the *proemio* (preface) to Mazzini’s *Scritti*, Aurelio Saffi celebrated Tavani Arquati as “una Madre, degna di Roma” (a mother worthy of Rome) and asserted that she, her husband, and her son had consecrated their lives “con fermezza antica, ai fati d’Italia” (with ancient firmness to the fate of Italy).⁹⁵ Immediately prior to that, however, he had praised Cairolì as the exemplar of Italian motherhood. Consoling Cairolì, Saffi argued that she would remain a “simbolo a tutti del dolore che redime e santifica, esempio solenne alle Donne italiane” (a symbol to all of the pain that redeems and sanctifies, a solemn example to Italian women).⁹⁶ In her volume on women in the Risorgimento, Giulia Cavallari Cantalamessa similarly glorified Tavani Arquati as a patriotic mother while making clear her preference for Cairolì. She claimed Cairolì was “la donna per altro che più di tutte merita il nostro affetto” (the woman who, more than anyone else, deserves our affection).⁹⁷ Furthermore, she stated that Cairolì represented the true values of antiquity and Roman motherhood. Cavallari Cantalamessa called her “l’italiana che accoglie e fonde insieme il sentimento tradizionale di Cornelia, e la fierezza della donna spartana” (the Italian woman who embraces and blends together the traditional sentiment of Cornelia and the pride of the Spartan woman).⁹⁸ Thus even feminist thinkers who accepted the transgressive actions of Tavani Arquati seemed to prefer the more conventional actions of women like Cairolì.

⁹¹ “Roma, 25 Settembre,” *Fanfulla*, 25 September 1887, a. XVII, n.261.

⁹² “Per Giuditta Tavani-Arquati,” *Il popolo romano*, 30 October 1893, a. XXI, n.300.

⁹³ *Statuto del circolo anticlericale femminile Giuditta Tavani Arquati* (Rome: Tipografia di G. Ciotola, 1890), 8.

⁹⁴ *Statuto del circolo anticlericale femminile Giuditta Tavani Arquati*, 3.

⁹⁵ Aurelio Saffi, “Cenni biografici e storici a proemio del testo,” in *Scritti editi ed inediti di Giuseppe Mazzini*, 2nd ed. (Rome: Tip. Forzani & Co., 1887), 15:lxxvi.

⁹⁶ Saffi, lxxiv–lxxv.

⁹⁷ Giulia Cavallari Cantalamessa, *La donna nel Risorgimento nazionale* (Bologna: Nichola Zanichelli, 1892), 46.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 46–47.

Anti-Catholic depictions of Tavani Arquati by male authors took a similarly mixed approach, simultaneously glorifying her bravery while condemning the lack of male initiative that made her sacrifice necessary. In his 1889 book on the Battle of Mentana, Luigi Guelpa emphasized Tavani Arquati's courage in the face of an overwhelming number of papal troops. Placing her at the center of his gruesome depictions of that day's violence, he claimed that her figure "domina la scena orrenda collo sguardo infuocato e colla mano tesa, armata di revolver" (dominates the horrendous scene with her fiery gaze and outstretched hand, armed with a revolver).⁹⁹ Guelpa further described how Tavani Arquati continued to fight after her husband and son fell, until she stood "macchiettate di gocce di sangue" (speckled with drops of blood) that resembled "i diamanti di quella testa di eroina" (diamonds on the heroine's head). In his rendition, Tavani Arquati stood as a regal leader, anointed with a crown of blood from her fallen compatriots and loved ones. He added, however, that in her moment of death, she found solace by thinking of how Italian history would immortalize her family, yet also felt "lo sdegno per la patria che non insurge" (disdain for her homeland that does not rise up).¹⁰⁰ In 1891, Pietro Valle more explicitly used Tavani Arquati's bravery to shame the men around her by claiming that most Romans were not worthy of that title in October 1867, having not displayed her courage. Valle asserted: "Gioite Romani, l'onore vostro è salvo: l'eroica morte della Giuditta bastò, essa sola, a scontrar l'inerzia di Roma nel 1867!" (Rejoice Romans, your honor is safe: the heroic death of Giuditta was enough, this alone [was] to atone for the passivity of Rome in 1867!).¹⁰¹ Though his reversal of typical gender roles glorified what women could achieve in exceptional situations, it also suggested that Tavani Arquati's heroism was partially an aberrant reaction to a period of moral decay under papal rule.

In contrast, *La civiltà cattolica* continued to oppose any glorification of Tavani Arquati as an ideal mother. Like Guelpa, the paper emphasized Tavani Arquati's violence, but interpreted it quite differently. Rather than valorizing her fighting as a display of patriotic commitment, it portrayed her as a deranged woman who, through her belligerence, lost the right to any codes of chivalry that may have protected her. The article argued that multiple soldiers had asked Tavani Arquati to step down before they attacked her and that they had only resorted to their bayonets because they had no time and space to reload their guns. It also cited the earlier autopsy as evidence that she was not pregnant and further maintained that even if she had been pregnant, it would have only proved that she was even worse of a mother than they had originally thought. Not only had she "condotto al macello il figlio giovinetto" (led to the slaughter her young son), but she also knowingly caused the death of her unborn baby.¹⁰² The paper expressed its shock that anyone would call her a heroine. Catholics and their opponents thus continued to fight over which side could claim virtuous motherhood as its own.

Revealing her continued importance in anti-Catholic rhetoric despite these debates, Tavani Arquati was then included in the celebrations surrounding the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Italian entry into Rome. On 18 September 1895, a variety of republican associations commemorated the victims of the Casa Ajani.¹⁰³ The Freemason and irredentist Salvatore Barzilai spoke at the gathering and linked the celebrations of 20 September 1870 to the events of October 1867, inasmuch as they both represented "il trionfo della lotta popolare" (the triumph of the people's fight). The celebrants also hung two banners on the walls of the building, arguing that the

⁹⁹ Luigi Guelpa, *Mentana: studio storico*, 2nd ed. (Turin: L. Roux & Co., 1891), 52.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Pietro Valle, *Sul sentiero della gloria* (Città di Castello: S. Lapi Tipografo-Editore, 1891), 558.

¹⁰² "La così detta eroina di Trastevere," *La civiltà cattolica* 8 (16 October 1893), 494.

¹⁰³ "Per Giuditta Tavani," *Il popolo romano*, 18 September 1895, a. XXIII, n.258.

battle of 1867 had been against “il dominio dei chierici” (supremacy of the clerics).¹⁰⁴ Revealing their combined anti-Catholic and patriotic sentiment in this memorial, the participants then sang the hymn to Garibaldi.¹⁰⁵

The celebratory literature surrounding the 1895 anniversary also utilized Tavani Arquati’s story to argue for both a long-standing Roman dislike of the papacy and the connections between ancient and contemporary Rome. One pamphlet included Tavani Arquati as an example of how the greatness of the ancient Roman spirit had lived on in the inhabitants of the city, despite the “contagio della corruzione gesuitica” (contamination of Jesuit corruption), linking both Tavani Arquati and the women of Trastevere to ancient Roman matrons:

Girando per le vie di Trastevere, guardando le famiglie dei popolani, nelle quali si mantiene più illesa da innesto forestiero la razza latina, vedevansi delle donne dalla figura imponente, dalla fronte altera, dallo sguardo sicuro, donne che presentavano l’immagine delle Veturie, delle Cornelie, e di tante madri d’eroi immortali. Tale era Giuditta Tavani Arquati

Wandering through the streets of Trastevere, looking at the families of the common people, in which the Latin race is kept more unharmed by foreign grafting, one saw women with an imposing figure, lofty foreheads, a sure gaze, women who presented the image of the Veturias, of the Cornelias, and of so many mothers of immortal heroes. Such was Giuditta Tavani Arquati.¹⁰⁶

This description reveals the continued significance of the Roman people in Italian patriotic discourse and the particular value that Tavani Arquati held as a Roman mother. The celebrations of the actual anniversary of September 20 then centered around the inauguration of the large equestrian statue of Garibaldi on the Janiculum Hill.¹⁰⁷ The ceremony revealed the long-standing importance of the ongoing challenge to the papacy in nationalist imagery.

Through its examination of the legacy of Giuditta Tavani Arquati in various histories, novels, memorials, and ceremonies, this article has offered a more intensively gendered analysis of Italian anti-Catholicism and the fight for Rome. It has highlighted Tavani Arquati as an understudied female hero in the Italian culture wars and demonstrated how she, as a native Roman, provided evidence for left-wing Italians of both the inherent patriotism of Romans and the potential of Roman women. In opposition to the commonly held assumption that women were likely to support the church or would be easily controlled by it, Tavani Arquati served as a powerful counterexample of a female ally in the fight against the papacy. Additionally, the article has argued that although anti-Catholic discourse generally retained a prioritization of male valor, frequent depictions of female victimhood, and heavy reliance on the symbolic value of republican motherhood, that same discourse could also promote a more expansive definition of maternal duties that allowed for a greater range of acceptable traits and behaviors for women. Those who celebrated Tavani Arquati admired not only the patriotic values she instilled in her children but also her physical strength,

¹⁰⁴ “Per Giuditta Tavani,” *Il popolo romano*, 19 September 1895, a. XXIII, n.259.

¹⁰⁵ “I radicali alla casa di Giuditta Tavani Arquati,” *La stampa*, 19 September 1895, n.260.

¹⁰⁶ *25° Anniversario del XX Settembre 1870: la breccia di Porta Pia. Narrazione storico-aneddotica per il popolo* (Rome: Stabilimento Tipografico dell’Editore Perino, 1895), 48.

¹⁰⁷ Atkinson and Cosgrove, “Urban Rhetoric and Embodied Identities,” 32; Brice, “Pouvoirs, liturgies et monuments,” 382.

bravery, and violent opposition to the papacy. From her position in the pantheon of Risorgimento martyrs, Tavani Arquati thus has served as a powerful symbol of anti-Catholic motherhood.