

INVITATION



International colloquium-workshop 15 June 2017
**“New perspectives on the secularization of funerary culture
in 19th- and 20th-century Europe.”**

The celebration of the key human rites of passage without church ceremony was a major theme of the 19th-century 'culture wars' between anticlerical forces and religious authorities across Europe. Around the mid-19th-century the organisation of civil burials became an important strategy among European freethinkers to weaken the institutional power of religious bodies and clear the ground for new secular practices. During the last decades of the 19th century cremation also became politically and religiously charged in various European countries, as it became a field of experimentation by those seeking secular alternatives to established Christian rites. Christianity kept an important place in the interwar cult of the dead in countries such as France, Britain and Belgium. While secular funerals lost their militant and anticlerical character in Western Europe, communist regimes in Eastern Europe imposed/favoured secular funerals with varying success, following Marxist-Leninist atheism.

Historians have generally treated the history of conflicts over death rites between anticlerical forces and Catholic/Protestant/Orthodox authorities in purely national contexts, while the topic of secular funerals in communist states has not received a lot of consideration. This international colloquium/workshop brings together scholars working on the history of secularism, atheism and funerary culture in France, Belgium, Luxemburg, Italy, Britain and Romania. This colloquium will facilitate a comparative analysis of the importance of secular funerals to freethinkers around Europe. The aim of the colloquium is to discover transnational links, to compare Western and Eastern European patterns over a longer period of time and to refine our understanding of the various dimensions of the process of secularization.

The colloquium takes place on 15 June 2017 in the Liberaal Archief in Ghent - Kramersplein 23, 9000 Gent
There is no registration fee. If you wish to attend, please register via mail: info@liberaalarchief.be

Presentations will be given in English and French

The colloquium is organized by the Liberaal Archief, a recognized archive and documentation centre on the history of liberalism and freethought in Belgium.

Programme 15 June 2017

09h30-09h40: Welcome-introduction by Peter Laroy (Director Liberaal Archief) and Christoph De Spiegeleer (Research Fellow Liberaal Archief/Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

09h50-11h10: Panel I: Patterns and evolutions in the history of civil burials in France and Romania

- Prof. dr. em. Jacqueline Lalouette (Université Lille III), *"L'évolution des enterrements civils en France depuis le XIXe siècle jusqu'à aujourd'hui."*
- Dr. Marius Rotar ("1 Decembrie 1918" University, Alba Iulia), *"Civil burials in Romania until the outbreak of the Second World War."*

11h10-11h25: Coffee break

11h30-12h50: Panel II: New practices and attitudes in 20th-century Britain and Luxembourg

- Prof. dr. David Nash (Oxford Brookes University), *"Secularists, humanists and atheists confront new paradigms of death and dying in 20th-century Britain."*
- Dr. Thomas Kolnberger (University of Luxembourg), *"The introduction of cremation in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg: a long struggle in a small state."*

12h50-13h40: Lunch

13h50-15h10: Panel III: Politics and pedagogy of mourning in liberal Italy and communist Romania

- Prof. dr. Dino Mengozzi (Università di Urbino), *"Les rites funéraires et la sécularisation en Italie, 1880-1910."*
- Dr. Cristina Diac (The National Institute for the Study of Totalitarianism, Bucharest), *"'Whoever doesn't die with us, dies against us'. The Romanian Communist Regime and the use of memorial services as a propaganda technique."*

15h10-15h25: Coffee break

15h30-16h50: Panel IV: Secular funerary culture in 19th-century Belgium

- Dr. Christoph De Spiegeleer (Liberaal Archief/Vrije Universiteit Brussel), *"The history of civil burials in Belgium during the long 19th-century from a European perspective."*
- Prof. dr. Jeffrey Tyssens (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), *"Working class children, death and secularity: Belgium in the 1890s."*