



NEWSLETTER

NEW DISCOVERIES

1. Regina Katharina Carey: the earliest woman painter?



Regina Katharina Carey, *Bombardment of the city of Frankfurt by the French troops... In the night of 13–14 July 1796*, aquatint (art market, 2008)

Archival records in Rome reveal that she and her husband James were buried on 17 October 1821, both of them having died two nights previously of a malignant fever. Historians of the cemetery have not

The recent exhibition in Rome devoted to Artemisia Gentileschi proved immensely popular. Many of the foreign painters who worked and eventually died here were also women. We thought that the earliest of them had been Eleonora Christine Harboe (1796–1860) from Denmark (see *Newsletter* 15). But there is a new candidate: Regina Katharina Carey.

identified her as a painter while art historians have not known when or where she died, usually guessing ‘around 1818’.

She was born Regina Katharina Schönecker in Nuremberg, Germany, in about 1762. She studied art with the artist couple, Johann Gottlieb and Maria Katharina Prestel (he had spent several years in Italy). The three of them produced a series of engravings, specialising in aquatints. Her own work can be found in public collections (for instance some aquatint/etchings in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.). In 1786 she married James Carey, an English teacher based in Frankfurt (his surname, and hers too, is sometimes given as ‘Quarry’). When and why they arrived in Rome is not known.

The death of the Careys in 1821 coincided with the decision of the Secretary of State, Cardinal Consalvi, to restrict use of the area in front of the Pyramid for Protestant burials. The Lutheran preacher in Rome, Heinrich Schmieder, accordingly had a grave dug for them in front of the tomb of William Bowles with its massive column. No headstone was ever erected; so there is no physical trace of what was probably the grave of the first woman artist to be buried here.

2. The antiquary Colin Morison and picture-dealer James Irvine

A number of the foreign artists who came to Rome in the eighteenth century earned considerable incomes as guides to visitors and/or as dealers in antiquities and paintings. Colin Morison, born in 1734 in Banffshire in Scotland, was one of them. Arriving in Rome in 1754 as a promising young painter, he switched to sculpture after a gunshot accident affected his eyesight. But it was as a *cicerone* that he came to be most in demand. His knowledge of classical literature and the antiquities of Rome was said to be as vast as his figure; James Boswell commented

cheekily that Morison had “such a prodigious quantity of body that it would require at least two souls to animate it”.

Morison made several return visits to Scotland. He also intended to purchase an estate there but he found he could no longer adapt to the climate and local way of life. So he stayed in Rome until his death which we now know was on 2 May 1809 (and not in 1810 as usually reported). More importantly, we learn that he was



Colin Morison, *Andromache offering sacrifice to Hector's shade*, ca.1760 (Tate, London; Morison's only known painting)



Drum Castle, Irvine's family home in Scotland

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buried in front of the Pyramid. This new information is due to the art historian Elisabetta Giffi. In researching Morison's life and work in the State Archive in Rome, she came across a deed relating to his burial. The notary was Giovanni Battista Sacchi. His deed states that the Vice-Governor of Rome issued a license for Morison's burial at the Pyramid and describes the funeral. Sacchi went to the house of the deceased in Via di San Sebastianello and then, with Morison's friends, followed the

carriage containing the coffin to the Pyramid where a grave had been dug to receive it. Usually we can assume that a Protestant dying in Rome at this date would have been buried at the Pyramid – this discovery has neatly confirmed the assumption.

One of the executors mentioned by Sacchi was the picture-dealer James Irvine, twenty years younger than Morison but from the same part of Scotland. He also had come to Rome as a painter but became one of the most successful dealers. He and Morison were among the few in the British colony who stayed in Rome in 1798 as Napoleon's armies approached. Irvine eventually died aged 74 in 1831 and was buried in the New Cemetery. But his grave has received little attention. It is at the focal point at the top of the central avenue, immediately visible to anyone entering the gate. Its epitaph, inscribed above a Masonic symbol, refers to him as "Historical painter Honorary Member of the Royal Institution of Edinburgh and of The American Academy of the Fine Art[s]" (founded in 1802, the academy adopted this name only in 1817) and credits Charles Irvine, his "affectionate nephew and heir".

The lives of these two leading figures in the world of the Grand Tour and the Italian art market have been intensively studied; but their deaths, too, merit a note, as does their burial in the "Cemetery of the English".

Nicholas Stanley-Price, with thanks for her help to Elisabetta Giffi, author of Colin Morison (1734-1809). Antiquaria, storiografia e collezionismo tra Roma e Aberdeen, Artemide Editoriale, Roma 2016.



Grave of James Irvine



The grave from behind



The Bildts: a Swedish family in Rome



Christian Ross (1843-1904), Alexandra Keiller

Carl Bildt was one of those scholar-diplomats who wrote extensively about the country in which he served. He was Swedish envoy in Italy from 1889 to 1902 and again from 1905 to 1920. He then remained in Rome until his death in 1931. He combined his diplomatic and scholarly skills to study Sweden's links with Italy. In his *Svenska minnen och märken i Rom* [Memories and traces of Swedes in Italy], he devoted a chapter to the Cemetery and to the Swedes buried there. But his main interest was Queen Christina of Sweden, who moved to Rome permanently in 1654 and converted to Catholicism. Pope Leo XIII gave the envoy exceptional access to records held in the Vatican, and Bildt's publications are still cited by scholars today.

In 1890 Bildt married for the second time. His wife was Alexandra Keiller, whose father was one of a group of Scottish industrialists working in Gothenburg in Sweden. The wedding celebrations in Rome brought together the Swedish community; but one Swedish resident was out of the country at the time. This was Axel Munthe, who was about to start practicing as a doctor to the foreign community. A few years previously Munthe had met Alexandra while holidaying with her family at the fashionable summer resort of Särö near Gothenburg. There had followed a passionate but doomed friendship (Munthe himself was unhappily married at the time). By chance both had now found themselves in Rome and were moving in the same social circles in the city.

It was in those circles that Alice Blanceflor (1891-1972), daughter of Carl and Alexandra, grew up, Italian by birth and international in culture and education. In her early twenties she fell in love with Prince Andrea Boncompagni Ludovisi and they planned to marry. Unfortunately the prince's parents had already promised their son to the daughter of a wealthy American, General William F. Draper. (Draper had served



Philip de László (1869-1937), Princess Andrea Boncompagni-Ludovisi, 1925 (detail)

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three years in Rome as American ambassador.) The outcome was an unusual prenuptial agreement. If, after ten years, there were no children from the arranged marriage and the prince so desired, the marriage could be annulled. His American wife would retain her title of 'Princess' and the prince would receive a substantial settlement from his wife's Draper fortune. Events took their natural course: the marriage was annulled after seven years in 1923, and Blanceflor, who had been waiting patiently, married her prince.

This confluence of Swedish, Italian and American culture and wealth led to today's Museo Boncompagni Ludovisi. Blanceflor, who died childless, bequeathed her house to the Italian State to be used for cultural purposes – it is now a museum for the decorative arts, dress and fashion of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Two of its permanent exhibits are charming portraits of mother and daughter, both painted by noted artists.

The Norwegian Christian Ross was resident in Rome (see *Newsletter* 34) when he painted Alexandra Keiller, perhaps on the occasion of her wedding. Ross was well regarded as a portrait painter and had several clients among foreign visitors to Italy. He was a popular member of the Danish-Norwegian artists' community at Sora and at Civita d'Antino in the Abruzzo.

Much more famous as a portraitist was Philip de László who painted Blanceflor. Known for painting directly onto the canvas and requiring only one sitting, he was extraordinarily prolific. He estimated that in his life-time he had completed 2,700 full-scale portraits (the total was probably higher). He painted an unparalleled range of royalty, presidents, aristocrats and distinguished figures in Europe and the United States. Born 'Laub' in Hungary, he changed his name to 'László' for patriotic reasons, converted from Judaism to Catholicism and, settling in London, eventually became a British citizen. It was his discerning portrait of Pope Leo XIII (Budapest, Hungarian National Gallery) that won a gold medal at the Paris *Exposition* in 1900 and helped to secure his reputation.



Photo: N. Stanley-Price

The Bildt family tomb

The Bildt family tomb, where the ambassador, his wife and his daughter lie, stands on a corner plot near the Aurelian city-wall (Zone 3.1.9.19). (Bildt had become 'de Bildt' after inheriting a baronial title in 1894.). The long Latin epitaph was composed by the Swedish classicist Johan Bergman, and celebrates Bildt's career, his love of Rome and his choice of 'this quiet place' for his grave. His widow Alexandra died in 1948. A few years earlier, she had written to Maja Sjöström (see *Newsletter* 28): "I thank God in heaven immensely that I have been so lucky to be allowed to live on the sunny side of life in this wonderful country."

Nicholas Stanley-Price, with thanks as usual to Åsa Rausing-Roos for the reference to Maja Sjöström.



HOW OTHERS SEE THE CEMETERY

Eleanor Clark's *Rome and a Villa*

Eleanor Clark's book should find its place on every reading-list for visitors to Rome (the 'villa' in the title refers to Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli). Originally published in 1952, it was the result of three years residence in the city. When invited twenty years later to have the book re-issued, Clark wrote a long introduction about returning to a much-changed Rome and, surprisingly, added a whole new chapter – a 40-page evocation of the Cemetery ("Beside the Pyramid"). It was this re-issue that the critic Anatole Broyard declared "perhaps the finest book ever to be written about a city" (it is still in print and available also on Kindle).

Her feelings about the Cemetery (echoing Henry James's "Here is a mixture of tears and smiles") are revealed in the following extracts (the quotation is from Keats's *The Fall of Hyperion*).

"This is to speak of an overall charity and grace that everyone feels in the cemetery, no matter how they express it or fail to. It is true of all graveyards that visitors, sightseers, wander more slowly than they are accustomed to, 'repressing haste, as too unholy there', but from this one it would be hard to find a person so stupefied as to come away without a mellower sense of life."

"It would be too callow to call the cemetery festive, but gloomless it certainly is, and homeless its dead are not. One might even speak of it as having, as a community shared also by its lovely vegetation and a large colony of cats at the base of the adjacent pyramid, a rare sense of humor ...surely we can imagine this little plot in Rome, unique in the world as it is, as wearing something in the nature of a smile...This quiet garden keeps the dignity of human grief."

Long may it remain so.

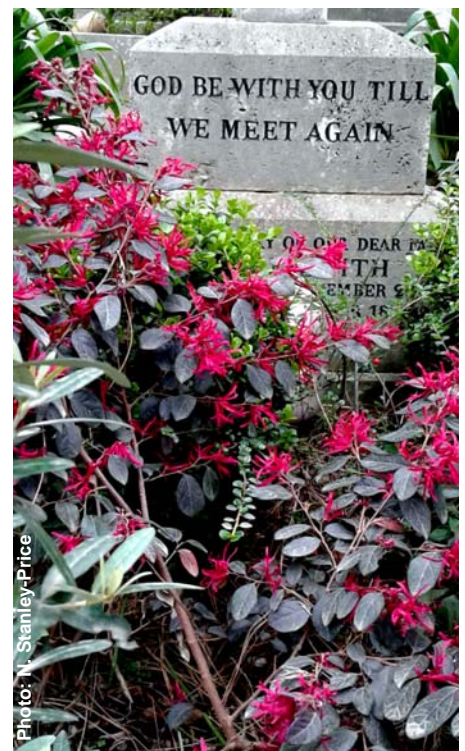


Photo: N. Stanley-Price

Visiting the grave of Antonio Gramsci



This year, the 80th anniversary of the death of Antonio Gramsci, has seen even more visitors than usual to his grave. For many Italians it is their main purpose in coming to the Cemetery. For other visitors from far away, Japan and Peru for example, it has been their primary goal in Rome (the Colosseum can wait).

In answer to the frequent questions as to why his grave is here:

- His ashes lie in a tomb of the Schucht family who were of USSR nationality and Russian Orthodox faith
- As the husband of Giulia Schucht, he had the right to be buried there
- The headstone bears inscriptions to the memory of Giulia's father and older sister Nadine
- The Schuchts died in the Soviet Union, so only Gramsci's ashes rest here
- The grave was moved to its present location in 1958 from a spot near Shelley's grave
- Pasolini composed his *Le Ceneri di Gramsci* before the transfer of the tomb.



27 April 2017

For the fuller story, see *Newsletter 10*.



Praise for our 300th anniversary exhibition

Our tercentenary exhibition brought several thousand visitors to the Casa di Goethe, our partner in organising this ambitious event (see *Newsletter 37*). The catalogue, in English, Italian and German editions, continues to sell well. All proceeds go to the two partner institutions. The success of the exhibition has now been hailed in the prestigious *British Art Journal* (Spring, 2017).

Jonathan Yarker, a leading scholar of British painting and the Grand Tour, writes of a "fascinating and highly focused exhibition" which offered important new evidence about the foreign communities in Rome and their relationship to Rome itself. "The beautifully produced catalogue is an important addition to the literature of the Grand Tour." The journal's cover features the little known watercolour by Jakob Philipp Hackert that proved to be one of the highlights of the show.

The catalogue will be referred to for years to come – you can buy it at the Cemetery or online at <http://www.cemeteryrome.it/2016Celebration/celebration.html#catalogue>.

Price only €18.00! The full review by Yarker is at http://www.cemeteryrome.it/2016Celebration/2016press/press_reviews.html

HOW TO BECOME A FRIEND

This Newsletter is made possible by the contributions of the Friends of the Cemetery.

The Friends also help fund the care of the trees in the cemetery and the restoration of tombs. Please can you help us by becoming a Friend? You can find a membership form at:

www.cemeteryrome.it

THE NON-CATHOLIC CEMETERY IN ROME

via Caio Cestio, 6, 00153, Roma

Director: Amanda Thursfield

OPENING HOURS

Monday to Saturday 9:00am - 5:00pm
(last entrance 4.30pm)

Sunday & Public Holidays: 9.00am -1.00pm
(last entrance 12.30pm)

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