

Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome



NEWSLETTER

Our monuments by Harriet Hosmer and Emma Stebbins

After the famous American actress Charlotte Cushman moved to Rome in the 1850s, her household became notorious for the changing relationships among the independent, unmarried women who lived there. Among them were the sculptors whom Henry James called, rather patronisingly, “a strange sisterhood” who settled in Rome as “a white, marmorean flock”. It is little known that two of those women sculptors, Harriet Hosmer and Emma Stebbins, produced gravestones for the Cemetery.

She did however design a tomb for Elizabeth Dundas (1826-1862; Zone 2.20.3) whose sister Anne was a close friend. The Dundas family home, Arniston House, just south of Edinburgh, was one of the stately homes where Hosmer would be invited to stay during her regular visits to Britain. Writing to Anne Dundas on 20 April 1862, Hosmer gives a progress report on the tomb that she had designed: “Will you say to your dear mother that we have been obliged to make it of marble to the ground, that is, to what was the ground in the design. I had it drawn full size, and I found it could not be done in any other way. It required a larger block of marble, but it will be very handsome when finished.” More than thirty years ago the Rev.



Headstone of K.Appleton

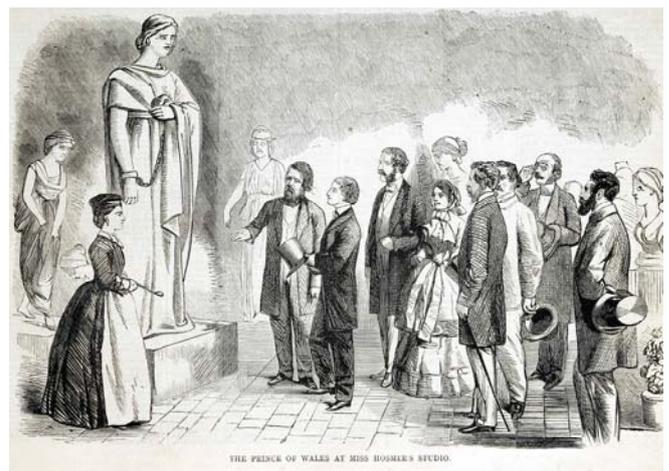
Those who know Central Park in New York will have seen Emma Stebbins’ sculpture of the *Angel of the Waters* atop the Bethesda Fountain. Her work in the Cemetery is modest, a simple headstone for the grave (Zone 1.15.35) of Katherine Appleton. The inscription “EMMA STEBBINS FECIT” was recorded during the 1980s survey and its significance spotted by Christine Huemer. Katherine Appleton was the wife of Benjamin Appleton, a medical doctor and graduate of Harvard who practised in Florence where he trained Sarah Remond in medicine (see *Newsletter* 26).



The Dundas tomb



Emma Stebbins, *The Angel of the Waters* (1873)



Harriet Hosmer’s studio: John Gibson explains her work to the Prince of Wales (cartoon from *Harper’s Weekly*, 1859)

The sculptures of Harriet Hosmer (1830-1908) are better known and more numerous since several of her smaller works such as *Puck* (1865) were produced in multiples. Her memorial to Judith Falconnet in Sant’Andrea delle Fratte was perhaps the first commission to an American sculptor in a Catholic church in Rome. Unusually, on arrival in the city she had been accepted as a pupil by John Gibson and for years she used his studio. On his death in 1866 she made a portrait medallion of him, but this is not the one at his grave (see again *Newsletter* 26).

Joseph Curran of Watertown, MA, wrote to the Cemetery about the letter (which is published in Harriet Hosmer, *Letters and Memories*, 1912, p.186) but the grave was not identified at the time.

Both Stebbins and Hosmer will remain better known for their sculptures than for their gravestones, but we can be proud to have examples of their work.

Nicholas Stanley-Price

“Innocence is not enough.” The tragic death of Herbert Norman, Canadian diplomat



Herbert Norman. Photo RBSC, University of British Columbia Library, with permission

The grave (at Zone V.15.10) of the former Canadian diplomat, E. Herbert Norman, occupies a privileged spot. It lies at the foot of one of the majestic cypress trees that Trelawny planted in 1823 in front of the grave of the poet Shelley. A simple triangular stone, inscribed with Norman's names and dates (1909-1957), marks the spot where his ashes were scattered. In 2000 the Government of Canada added a further memorial to “A patriotic Canadian”. Its inscription discloses that he “died tragically in Cairo” and cites a Japanese *haiku* by Hakurin which reads in translation:

*Well then, let's follow
the peal of bells
to the yonder shore*

While Canadian Ambassador in Cairo, Herbert Norman took his own life, a victim of the McCarthyist witch-hunt for suspected Communist agents. Shortly after his arrival in Cairo, a U.S. Senate sub-Committee renewed charges against him, charges of which he had already been cleared in two intensive hearings held in Ottawa in 1950 and 1952. Since his death, they have been investigated by others making use of de-classified government files. Appalled at the threat then posed by Fascist regimes, Norman was among those who flirted with communism in the 1930s while studying at the two Cambridges – first in England and then at Harvard for his Ph.D. in Japanese history. Not one of the several enquiries has found any evidence of disloyalty once he had entered Canada's diplomatic service.

But why was Ambassador Norman buried in Rome? and why a Japanese *haiku* on his memorial?

It was Norman's widow, Irene, who chose the Cemetery: “I liked the idea of Rome. There was no plot in Ontario more appropriate”, she explained, adding that they had visited the Cemetery together in the past. Two days after Norman's death on 4 April, a memorial service was held at St. Andrew's Church in Cairo, and then his body was flown to Rome on a Royal Canadian Air Force plane for cremation at Campo Verano. There was no service, no ceremony at the graveside; only Mrs Norman, a couple from the Embassy in Cairo and “the very nice old Italian who looked after the burying ground for more than forty years [Marcello Piermattei]”. In contrast, later that day a public

memorial service in Ottawa, heavily attended by the press, was a noisy occasion which reflected the public outcry over the “assassination by slander” of a well-respected diplomat.

And not only a diplomat. Herbert Norman had been born in Japan of missionary parents. His fluency in Japanese and his scholar's knowledge of Japanese history led to his being posted to Canada's legation in Tokyo in 1940-42; for a period after the war to the staff of General Douglas MacArthur, whose task was to demilitarise and democratise Japanese society; and then, until 1950, to be head of the Canadian mission in occupied Japan. In this role he not only re-established ties with Japanese scholars but worked to moderate the high-handed approach adopted by MacArthur towards the occupied country.

But his diplomatic career stalled in 1950 when he was recalled to Ottawa to face the first enquiry into his past. Ironically, in view of its tragic end in Cairo, Norman's diplomatic life could instead have been an academic career. He received several offers of prestigious academic posts. His books on Japanese history were influential in the West and in Japan, where the profound respect for him is reflected in Japanese editions of his work and a greater renown than he enjoys in Canada.

But he preferred to serve his country as a diplomat. Posted as Ambassador to Cairo in 1956, he arrived a few weeks after President Nasser had nationalised the Suez Canal. Lester Pearson, the External Affairs Minister, later commented that “his dispatches from Cairo were brilliant” as Canada worked to convince President Nasser to accept a UN Emergency Force in Sinai. Thanks in part to Norman establishing a personal rapport with Nasser, Canada's efforts were successful. Pearson was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize the following year. But it was too late for his Ambassador to enjoy any reflected glory. By then, faced with the US Senate's refusal to accept his innocence, Norman had made his own decision.

At the University of Toronto Norman had studied Classics, and Classical references recur in his lucidly written dispatches and in his books about Japan. Rome was indeed an appropriate final resting-place for this scholar-diplomat who loyally served his country.

Nicholas Stanley-Price

For the burial, I have drawn on Cemetery records and, crucially, on Roger Bowen's *Innocence is not enough. The life and death of Herbert Norman* (1986). I thank Jessica Blitt of the Canadian Embassy in Rome for locating this source. On Norman's life, <http://web.uvic.ca/ehnorman/>



Grave of Herbert Norman

A Dutch artist's funeral in 1846

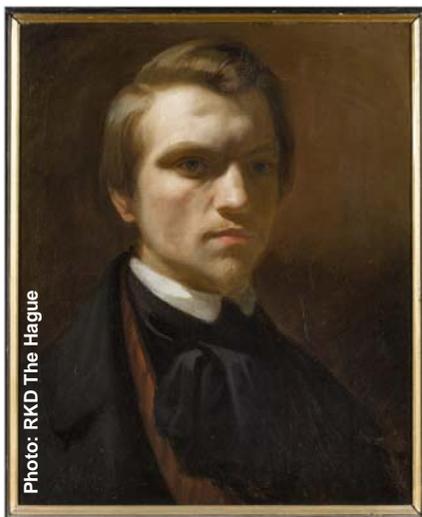


Photo: RKD The Hague

Unknown artist, *Portrait of William Archibald Bake* (ca 1840-45), private collection.

No memoirs and only one known drawing by William Archibald Bake (1821-1846) survive to remind us of his brief time in Italy. His presence in Rome would probably have gone unnoticed if it had not been for Jan Philip Koelman, his fellow-countryman and painter. Koelman published extensive memoirs of his own long stay (1844-1857), in which he not only passionately argued for the Italian national

cause but also vividly described the foreign artists in Rome.

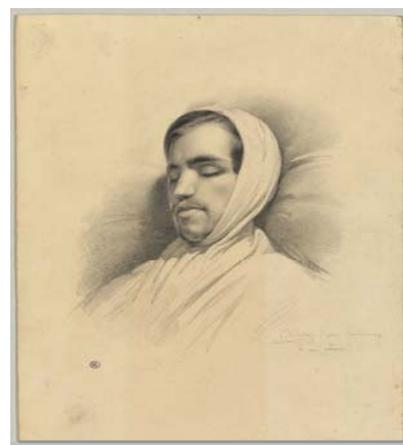
In his very first chapter Koelman describes witnessing the death of his young friend 'Jan Willem' Bake, on June 3rd 1846 in Ariccia. The two had met a few years before as students at the 'Drawing-Academy' in The Hague. Bake's promising talent earned him a royal grant that enabled him to travel to Paris, Munich, Dresden and Rome, where he joined Koelman and their teacher Cornelis Kruseman. Little by little, his health began to fail. He was asthmatic and suffered from 'internal feavers'. On the advice of the French family Bellay (the painters François and his son Charles) whom he befriended and their doctor Leonardy, he left Rome for Albano and then Ariccia, where the air was supposed to be drier and cleaner. But his health deteriorated drastically. At first the Swiss artist Alfred van Muyden and the German painter Friedrich Becker took turns to watch over him, later relieved by Koelman, the Flemish painter Victor Lagye and Charles Bellay. Bake seemed to recover briefly after being treated with the cold water therapy that was then in vogue across Europe. But he soon relapsed and died.

Koelman drew Bake's portrait in pencil shortly after he had died. The drawing is unknown, but a copy by Charles Bellay has been recently discovered. Bellay must have kept too a drawing by Bake (also in the Louvre) on which, a few days before his death, Bake

had written: '*Salvez la famille Bellay, qui m'a toujours témoigné tant d'amitié. O comment pourrai-je récompenser tout ce qu'elle a fait pour moi. Ariccia 29 mai 1846 - W. A. Bake.*'

Having obtained official permission, six of Bake's friends brought his body from Ariccia to Rome, where it was placed in the Prussian legation's chapel in the German Hospital on the Capitoline Hill. The next morning Koelman, Lagye, Becker, Van Muyden, Bellay, Leonardy and probably others gathered in the Caffè Greco for breakfast, this time not 'dressed in their usual careless style' but in formal black suits. A carriage brought them from Piazza di Spagna to the Protestant Cemetery for the funeral of their late friend. In his memoirs, Koelman describes the pyramid and cemetery, and how he witnessed for the first time a funeral service in Restored Lutheran style (a Dutch schism from Evangelical Lutheranism). It was led by Heinrich Thiele, pastor to the Prussian legation, and accompanied by a fine organ and the hymns of a choir.

Then all those present followed the bier, covered by a large black velvet pall with a silver stitched cross, to the grave (Zone 1.7.14). To Koelman the setting was a 'peculiar combination of ancient greatness and naive pettiness': the pyramid and city walls, severe and proud guardians of the cemetery, made it 'the most solemn resting place I have ever seen'. But the 'desperate attempts' of the custodian to transform the site into a garden by planting roses and violets around the tombs somewhat spoil this serene atmosphere and 'could not be absolved from pettiness'.



Charles Bellay after Jan Philip Koelman, *Death Portrait of William Archibald Bake* (1846)
© Musée du Louvre, Paris

After the interment, Koelman joined in a guided tour of the cemetery by pastor Thiele and then hurried off to the next funeral. For, as he noted with a touch of irony, he attended on the same day the funeral of his artist friend at the unconsecrated cemetery and that of Pope Gregory XVI, an event that marked the beginning of turbulent times for Rome and Italy.

Asker Pelgrom, Utrecht University, The Netherlands



How to bury a non-Catholic on Catholic ground

During World War I, a Protestant chaplain with the American troops in Italy became a friend of a local Roman Catholic priest. When the priest heard later of the chaplain's death, he asked military authorities for permission to bury him in the cemetery behind his church. He received permission, but the Catholic Church could not approve the burial of a non-Catholic in a Catholic cemetery. The priest buried his friend just outside the cemetery fence. Years later a war veteran, who knew what had happened, returned to Italy and visited the old priest. The first thing he did was to ask to see the chaplain's grave. To his surprise, he found the grave inside the fence. "Ah," he said, "I see you got permission to move the body." "No," said the priest. "They told me where I couldn't bury the body. But nobody ever told me I couldn't move the fence."

Edited with permission from a text by Kenneth Sharpe on myGuidon.com, 5.9.2013

The Cemetery in the media (again)

Cinemas in Italy have been showing the new film *Sotto una nuova stella* by director and actor Carlo Verdone. The Cemetery is the backdrop for some shots and is described by one of the characters as "the most beautiful place in Rome". It also featured in Michael Winterbottom's *A trip to Italy* (BBC, 2014) with the two stars having a brief exchange in front of the *Angel of Grief* sculpture.

All requests for filming in the Cemetery are vetted to ensure that they respect the purpose and atmosphere of the place. These were captured well in a radio piece by Alan Johnston, BBC correspondent in Rome, that was aired in April. For the transcript and also for an insightful appreciation of the Cemetery by Richard Hodges, see <http://www.cemeteryrome.it/press/press.html>. There have been many other mentions of the Cemetery in the Italian and foreign press and in numerous blogposts by satisfied visitors.

POETS IN THE CEMETERY: Amelia Rosselli



Photo: Dino Ignani

A growing number of critics of 20th-century Italian poetry agree that few writers have been as important and original as Amelia Rosselli (1930-1996). She was born in Paris to Marion Cave, an English Labour Party activist, and Carlo Rosselli, leader and founder with his brother Nello of the anti-Fascist movement Giustizia e Libertà. Already familiar with exile, Amelia was soon introduced to tragedy when, in 1937, her father and uncle were murdered by La Cagoule, a French, fascist-leaning, revolutionary group. Moving to England and then to the United States, Rosselli did not live in Italy until 1948. She settled in Rome where, in addition to studies in music, she began to work as a translator.

As often noted, it is precisely this unique, if traumatic, cultural and linguistic inheritance that gives her poetry its charge, complexity, and singularity. It is, says one of her most recent English-language translators, Jennifer Scappettone, "arguably the poetry most vital to evolving understandings of global modernism and postmodernism to have emerged from postwar Italy". Rosselli's book and journal publications in the 1960s and 1970s won the respect of writers such as Andrea Zanzotto and Pier Paolo Pasolini. Yet, in the following decades up until her death, with the exception of anthologies and earlier writings that she had not published, her poetic output effectively ceased. Plagued throughout her adult life by greater and lesser episodes of mental illness and hospitalization, at the age of only 66, Amelia Rosselli sadly ended her life. Her grave lies at Zona 2.8.8.

In Via del Corallo, near the Chiesa Nuova in central Rome, a memorial plaque gives the closing lines of her last poem *Impromptu* (translated here by Giuseppe Liborace and Deborah Woodard, with their permission):

*And if limping
fellow countrymen are these lines it's
because we are ready for another
story that we know quite well and which we
will promptly forgo when the time comes, lost
the knack for instantaneous rhyme
for when the time was right the rhythm
had already winked at you.*

Contributed by Alexander Booth, a writer and translator, formerly in Rome and now in Berlin, whose work can be found at *Wordkunst*.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND CEMETERIES ...and it will only get worse!



Photo: Istvan Kovacs

Notre-Dame-des-Neiges cemetery, Montreal, Canada



Photo: Daily Telegraph

Severn Stoke, UK, January 2013

The President, H.E. Nomatamba Tambo, inaugurating the Garden Room (see Newsletter 26)



Photo: Comitato Gianicolo

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

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(last entrance 4.30pm)
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